

A WOLF IN THE FAMILY

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JEROME HELLMUTH



AN NAL-WORLD BOOK

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Received on 1949 1968

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FIRST PRINTING

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 64-8210

Published by The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.,
501 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022

Published simultaneously in Canada by General Publishing Company, Ltd.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A WOLF IN THE FAMILY

I The idea had been growing in my mind for some time—ever since we had acquired our big pet Alaskan malamute, Sitka. And the longer I toyed with the prospect the more fascinating it became. After a while I couldn't dispel the thought: Our family should raise a wolf as a house pet.

There had been a whole series of animals—wild and domestic—in our home from the time Elane and I were married, and our four daughters had always been surrounded by animals: raccoons, foxes, all kinds of dogs, porcupines, no end of cats, woodchucks, squirrels, and even skunks, the unaltered kind. A wolf, in a way, would be just one more animal.

Besides, I realized when I thought about it, I had wanted

to have a wolf of my own all my life. I remembered how, sitting on my grandfather's knee, I had listened to stories about the wolf he kept in Wisconsin, where he used to go hunting. Grandfather had captured this wolf alive, and soon he became so fascinated by it that he paid out considerable sums of money to have it cared for while he attended to his business of manufacturing barrels in Chicago. He never wholly tamed the animal because he was away from it most of the time, but he believed deeply that, had he had more time, this could have been accomplished, for the wolf always remembered him and took food from his hand no matter how long he had been away. Perhaps it was this early heritage of belief in the potential friendliness of an animal generally thought to be ferocious that inspired me now.

I found, when I broached the subject to Elane, that she cherished no such sentimental inclinations.

"As far as I can see," she said, pointing to Sitka taking up half the living-room rug where he lay stretched out on the floor, "we practically have a wolf in the house now."

The comparison had relevance and an understandable note of complaint. The Alaskan malamute is probably about as close as a dog can get to being a wolf. As the only native sled dog of North America, the Alaskan malamute has lived intimately with the wolf for generations. Eskimos and Indians have been known to stake out their female malamutes in season to breed with wolves in order to strengthen the blood lines of their sled teams.

Sitka's roots went back to Alaska some two generations. A brute of an animal in size, weighing close to one hundred pounds, with the markings of a gray wolf, and stretching six feet from nose to tail, he made anyone who

met him pause and catch his breath. Yet he was never known to growl or mutter at any person, young or old, even in trying circumstances that would have set most dogs into fits of rage.

He could, nevertheless, be a most exasperating dog to live with, as Elane had intimated. He had that hard irreducible inner core of wanting his independence at all times, so characteristic of animals close to the wild. We had bought Sitka as a three-year-old in Vermont, where we spent the summers to escape the miserably hot streets of New York City. But whether surrounded by the endless forests of the Green Mountains in our backwoods home in Vermont or choked in by towering skyscrapers in our cramped Manhattan apartment, Sitka always managed to escape and be free. This could mean off to the woods for days, or in New York, darting across the full length of the city through swarming millions of people and automobiles. Neither could he bear staying home alone. If you locked him up in the house, he had to follow you, even if it meant going through a window. If there were no window, he'd take out a wall with his big jaws, as he once did in Vermont. Hitch him to a cow chain and he would snap it in two.

If Sitka's spirit represented what we might expect of a wolf, then Elane's position had considerable merit. Yet, as I pointed out to her, once you've lived with a malamute you want a wolf.

"Most malamute owners feel this way," I went on, hoping my wife would agree. "It's as though you need to find the whole truth once you've seen the half that's hidden in the mysterious wild nature of the Alaskan malamute."

Elane remained unimpressed. "I'll settle for half the

truth. Sitka's enough for me. With a wolf it could be more serious—maybe dangerous. How sure can you be about a wolf? How safe will he be with the children? Who knows what a wolf will do in a house? Oh, I know you're always talking about how the wolf was once man's best friend. But that was long ago. Today people are civilized and the wolf is man's enemy."

Elane had tradition on her side, no doubt about it. Throughout most of recorded history, man has been unequivocally antiwolf. Greek and Roman literature heap slanders upon the wolf. Only a few medical advantages were grudgingly attributed to this animal—such as wolf dung in a man's eye as the perfect cataract cure, or more grimly, baths in oil boiled from whole wolves prescribed by a Greek medic, Paulus Aegineta, for his arthritic patients. During the Middle Ages, anyone who did not conform to the theological doctrines then in vogue was considered a werewolf, or man-wolf—the wolf part being a personification of the beast that lurks threateningly in each one of us. If too much of the werewolf possessed a man, the Christian thing to do was to deliver him of his sins by any one of a variety of merciful (and legal) deaths. The proclaimed ferocity and bloodthirsty nature attributed to the wolf had also, perversely, its attraction to man, as the evil he fashions often does. In early Anglo-Saxon times it became a great fad and a real social asset to possess, or claim to possess, the courage, tenacity, and brute force of the wolf. Kings and nobles hitched onto their names, fore and aft, like heraldic flags on their ships at sea, the magic word of "Wolf" or "Wulf," as in Berthwolf, Wulfred, Wolfwig, and of course, that heroic figure, Beowulf.

Probably the most lasting and repulsive image of the

wolf came, however, from the fairy stories and folklore poured into the impressionable minds of little children. Tales of the cruel and voracious wolf abound in almost every country of the world. Of these, Red Riding Hood stands as the classic. Those two energetic fellows, the brothers Grimm, who gathered up German folktales with the deftness of hop-pickers along the Rhine, got their material for this story from an old hag, Frau Viehmannin, the wife of a cowherd of Niederrzwehrn. Understandably she would have nasty things to say about an animal that carried off her husband's cows, and it was no trouble at all for her to substitute children for cows as the favorite dish of the wolf.

In fact, the basis for much of the long-standing ill will toward the wolf can be thus explained. In tracing the historical relationship between man and wolf, I found that it wasn't until man became a herder of animals that he ran into serious problems with the wolf. That could have started as far back as the New Stone or Neolithic Age, some 10,000 years ago. Given the long period of time that man, the herdsman, has fought this battle with the wolf wherever he has appeared—and the wolf was everywhere on the face of the earth that man happened to be with his flocks and most places where man had not yet arrived—it is not surprising that a monumental storehouse of derogatory material about the wolf has accumulated.

But there is also evidence of quite a different kind of animal than the one traditionally portrayed, and it was this that stirred my curiosity. Primitive man, for instance, who was no caretaker of animals, never had serious problems with the wolf. Quite the opposite. From the reports of early explorers and settlers who visited America before the

white man invaded the land with his lumbering cattle, I learned that the wolf was more of a pet than an enemy of the Indian. Indeed, the Indians had no other dogs until they were introduced from Europe, and their domesticated wolves—some Indian families were known to have kept as many as thirty to forty—obeyed commands, and were used to trail game or draw baggage, according to observers of the day.

Much later, the American naturalist John James Audubon recorded a meeting with a hunter in southern Kentucky who was followed by a tame black wolf. "He assured us that it was as gentle as any dog," Audubon wrote, "and that he had never met with a dog that could trail a deer better. We were so much struck with this account and the noble appearance of the wolf, that we offered him one hundred dollars for it; but the owner would not part with it for any price."

If the domesticated wolf was once a close companion of man, why not again, I wondered.

"Someone's got to find out," I told Elane.

"Find out what?" she asked.

"Find out what?" I repeated. "Find out the truth about the wolf. It's important, as the discovery of all truth is. Furthermore, there are only a few wolves left today. The bounty-hunters have been after their hides for centuries. Tomorrow the wolves may be all gone. It would be awful to discover too late that mankind had made a big mistake, that we had condemned this animal to death and final extinction by our blind hate and prejudice. Most books, I've found, don't tell the truth, and to study wolves in cages is to lock up the truth. There's only one way to know about a wolf: Live with him in your home."

Elane stared at me as though I had taken off into orbit and was fast disappearing beyond her vision.

“And where do you plan to do this cozy experiment in urban wolf domesticity?” she challenged. “In our New York City apartment?”

2

Elane's question neatly put an end to my speculations, for the time be-

ing at any rate. It would indeed be pressing our luck to bring a wolf to New York City. Our landlord, who had tolerated not only Sitka for three years but also a host of sundry other animals, including our frisky raccoon who had invaded his apartment one night and turned it upside down, had about reached the end of his rope.

Manhattan landlords generally have their hands full coping with quite a wide range of odd and assorted human beings, especially where we lived in Greenwich Village, without taking on any strange tenants from the wild animal kingdom. Most leases in New York City prohibit any animals, other than the human kind, from occupying the premises. (Some leases even prohibit the human kind, if

they happen to resemble children.) In spite of these restrictions, however, apartments in New York crawl with animals of all kinds, shapes, and sizes. In fact, New York, per square inch, is probably the largest dog kennel and animal compound in the world. The thousands of "Please Curb Your Dog" signs posted all over the city are backed by stiff fines to preserve some unsullied territory for the humans who must trod the sidewalks every day. To our knowledge, however, wolves had not yet joined this motley metropolitan retinue, and certainly our landlord wasn't the one to ask to initiate such an animal epic.

But in pointing up the bleak prospects for my pet-wolf project, at least so long as we lived in New York City, Elane had brought to the fore another dream.

We had recently been giving serious thought to the idea of moving to the Northwest, to Seattle, Washington, where Elane was born and a few of her relatives lived. We had spent twelve years in Manhattan, and life in New York was beginning to hang heavily on our spirits. Our four children, plus our animals, made our family much too big and too expensive for New York City living. We yearned for the elbowroom of the kind of outdoor living we had in Vermont, and for more than the few precious summer months each year allowed us. We wanted our own house with our own big yard where we could live the way we wished without concern for landlords or tenants rapping on walls and steam pipes to keep our kids quiet.

Professionally, too, I had become restless. As an educator I had taught, served as guidance director and then assistant director of Elisabeth Irwin High School, which is the secondary division of the private school, Little Red School House. At the same time, after school hours, I had been a practicing lay analyst, offering psychological coun-

selling to both adults and adolescents. But lately I had come to feel I was in a rut, and longed for the challenge of change to another town and job and way of life.

More than that, I wanted my growing children to get a broader picture of our country and its culture, for New York in no way represents the way the rest of the country lives. There was also the growing threat of danger in the streets of New York—such as the experience our older daughters had of being beaten up by roving gangs of girls, many of them far more vicious than the gangs of boys. And for the past several years there had been the question of whether New York City would be the best place to raise our brain-damaged and mentally retarded youngest child, Darien.

Now, added to all this, was my hope that we might discover some nice niche of peace and love to raise a wolf. And somehow, about this time, the ideas merged: to find a new life in the big Northwest country and to own a wolf. Seattle beckoned ever more invitingly.

Such things take time to arrange, however. As it turned out, the move to Seattle would not take place until two years later, in the summer of 1958, which was probably just as well. All of us—and Elane especially—had plenty of time to get used to the thought of a wolf in the family before such a thing could possibly become a reality.

The process of adding anything to our household had always involved, for Elane, a ritual rather similar to having a baby. Acceptance for membership in the intimate and sacred circle of the family, whether it be for an old battered secondhand Chevy, a bargain table lamp from Macy's, or even a painted turtle from Woolworth's, came slowly with her. It mattered little if the conception initially derived from her own fertile idea or originated with a slick adver-

tisement, the whimsy of her children, or an urgent husband. Long days of gestation were required—a quiet contemplative time to decide whether this proposed love-object would be deserving of all the time and devotion that she would, for years hence, be asked to give. In the case of animals (which, once acquired, were less easy to discard without heartbreak than table lamps or automobiles) the ritual was particularly poignant, and the chances of an uneventful and painless miscarriage of the whole idea was real and easy indeed with her. But I noted with satisfaction as the weeks passed, that Elane's reflections about the proposition of having a wolf in the house (providing, of course, that the house was in Seattle and not New York City) were increasingly favorable.

From the first I expected the children to accept the idea far more readily. Animals and talk of animals had always been part of their lives. Yet each of the girls had her own feelings about the wolf. For Karen, fifteen and the oldest, who was an attractive blonde and a sophomore in high school, animal crushes were rapidly being supplanted by the more satisfying and substantial boy crushes. Her interest in the wolf, though reflecting some glimmer of family pride, served mostly to bait promising young boys into her lair by their curiosity about such a novel pet.

On the other hand, Jana, who was twelve, was still in that familiar vacuum of preadolescence where the horse was the only important fact worth noting in life. Unlike most girls of her age, however, who cling to this odorous period of the barnyard with tenacious reverence, Jana was quite willing to take leave of it, for she had lately been thrown by a horse and her feelings of dedication to this animal had accordingly cooled. She was a girl who had no animal favorites, actually, for she loved them all. Should

she but see any living thing, particularly the young and the helpless, her cherubic face would light up with the spiritual incandescence of a saintly nun smitten with some beatific vision from above to save all the poor and suffering here below. Thus the thought of having the rejected and maligned wolf in our home to share our bread and board completely enthralled Jana and gave her a new mission in life.

But the mere mention of the idea frightened Thane to death. At the age of nine, Thane was the classic portrait of the victim of the folklore about wolves. She demonstrated this whenever the subject came up. Her skin, ordinarily fair and delicate, would blanch to an even ghostlier white parchment, and she would lapse into an impressive catatonic speechlessness. My hope—and it turned out to be a reasonable one—was that once she became accustomed to the idea of having a wolf in our home she might exorcise herself of her horrendous demon of fear.

Darien, our four-year-old, had no fears whatsoever when it came to animals. The likelihood was that she wouldn't have any about the wolf. As a brain-injured and mentally retarded child she had been spared the traditional prejudices of the normal, and in this sense could be more normal about the wolf than the normal. Of all our pets, Sitka was her favorite. Sitka, in fact, had taught her how to walk as a baby by allowing her to hold onto his sturdy rump, and was always her close and trusted companion. Our big Alaskan malamute had prepared Darien well for living with a wolf.

I, meanwhile, was continuing my own preparations. I was particularly interested in seeing a live wolf, not just reading about him. The only possibility for this was at the

zoos. To my astonishment, I discovered that most zoos didn't have wolves. The few that did had only a token showing—usually one mangy-looking creature that appeared to have done the zoo circuit, like an unwanted step-child. The world-famous Bronx Zoo, for instance, had just received its only wolves, a pair from the Rocky Mountains. Even these, the attendant informed me, might not remain there long. Wolves, I could see, were not in vogue, like the cuddly pandas. I wondered whether people preferred the more familiar wolves they knew from fairy stories, for it was most interesting to observe their expressions of surprise when they glanced in the wolf cage. "Why," they exclaimed with disbelief, "they look just like dogs!" The appearance of a real wolf had no resemblance to the nightmarish caricature they had been carrying in their minds since childhood.

I found that the natural history museums had many more wolves than the zoos—although dead, stuffed, and mounted. They were handsomely preserved specimens, but again there was the old stereotyped image of the fairy-story wolf even in these halls of science. Invariably the wolf was cast-typed as a slinking ruthless killer, like a popular Hollywood villain, a kind of quadruped Humphrey Bogart. Out of all fairness to the facts of natural science, I couldn't help but reflect, it might be more honest to show the wolf occasionally doing something else. Most statues of man do not show him holding only a spear or bomb in his hand.

In particular I thought of the findings of Dr. Adolph Murie. His study of the eating habits of wolves in Mt. McKinley National Park, which came out in 1948, had represented the first serious documented attempt to tear off the

false mask that man had fashioned for the wolf to wear for centuries. Repercussions of the controversy that had brought about Dr. Murie's study were still being heard.

From the late 1800's, when the enterprising cattlemen took over the Western Plains, till the early 1900's, no one had to scratch his scientific head about what wolves ate in a country overflowing with fat juicy cows. The wolves were naturally eating cows. There was nothing else left for them to eat but cows. Ranchers, badly hit in the pocketbook, drew up top-level plans to get rid of the wolves—to exterminate them. This was energetically undertaken with gun, trap, and poison, supported by a liberal cash allowance of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the federal government, steamrolled by a powerful cattleman's lobby, one of the most influential in the history of the country. So well was the job done, not only in the West, but by example, throughout the United States, that today there is hardly a handful of wolves left anywhere in the country.

By the 1940's, conservationists got worried and began a campaign to save the few wolves that were left. Their opponents—mostly sportsmen and their allies—objected: "Not while they are in the wilderness areas killing off valuable game that we, given but a sporting chance, could do just as well ourselves." The lines were drawn and the U. S. Government was embarrassingly caught in the cross-fire.

The cause of the Dall sheep in Mt. McKinley National Park in Alaska became the battleground. The sportsmen strategically picked this location for the fight, crying, "Are the people paying their good taxes to support wolves so that they can kill off all the sheep and wildlife in the park?" Replied the conservationists, "Rubbish. As a steady diet

for wolves, the Dall sheep don't rate even close to the top of the menu."

To be fair and square, the government hired a crack biologist (later referred to as "crackpot" biologist by the sportsmen), Dr. Adolph Murie, to go up to Mt. McKinley and get the facts. He did, on and off, from 1939 to 1946, inspecting the stomachs of dead wolves and poking around in their droppings along the trails. For days and weeks he sat patiently and watched the wolves, made notes, and took pictures. Finally, a Congressional Committee Hearing was held to consider two bills by the sportsmen's groups to get rid of the wolf in the park. Dr. Murie's findings were presented. He exonerated the wolf as a ruthless predator and as a serious threat to the wildlife of the park. The bills were defeated.

It was that part of Dr. Murie's report dealing with the family life of the wolf, characterized by devotion, loyalty, and sociability, that excited me. Nothing like this had ever been said before. It dovetailed with my own belief that the strong and loyal family ties of this animal could be integrated into the human family to make the wolf a close and dependable pet of man. Dr. Murie's report was an impelling source of inspiration to pursue my plans of one day bringing a wolf to live with us in our home.

Perhaps then, I said, the truth about the wolf would finally be known.

3 The big old furnished house had two floors, a large basement, and

enough rooms, it seemed, to accommodate a couple of families. It was in the Capitol Hill district, famous for its early mansions and large families, and luckily, its original dimensions were intact. Many of these fine old Capitol Hill homes were now being converted into new apartment dwellings, thus losing much of their original charm. Seattle was still too young to appreciate the old.

From the park commanding the heights of Capitol Hill there were breathtaking views of the majestic snow-covered mountains of the Olympics to the west and the Cascades in the east. Far off to the north, reaching into British Columbia, stretched the blue waters of Puget Sound with its fairy islands adrift in the soft haze. Mt. Rainier lay to

the south, alone and awe-inspiring, wreathed in mists. From our house, located a few blocks below the park, a view of the Cascade Range could be seen from any window, and it seemed that we spent our first weeks in Seattle that summer of 1958, going from window to window, studying the beauty and detail of every scene as one would rare paintings at an art exhibition. In Manhattan all we had were the same drab buildings across the street and the smallest slice of dirty blue sky from one corner bedroom.

To live in our own house, to be free of landlords after fifteen years in New York apartments had been part of the dream that brought us west. We now had the house all right. But we still had a landlord.

We had decided to rent again because we felt we needed time to find the kind of house and community we wanted to settle in permanently. Our landlord this time, however, would not be living in the same building. Mr. Rausch would not even be living in Seattle, having been transferred unexpectedly to the Midwest. And with a landlord that far away, it would be almost like our own house. For the first time we could feel free to do as we wished—even, say, to raise a wolf.

To be sure, we didn't mention the idea to Mr. Rausch, believing it might be just as well to let sleeping wolves lie. We could assume he didn't like animals since he had none himself. How he came to take us with our two big dogs—Sitka now had a mate, Ootak, an attractive silver-gray female malamute we had brought along with us from Vermont—was more a matter of necessity than any free choice on his part. It just so happened that we were the only available tenants ready to move in when Mr. Rausch and his family had to move out.

Although we had reveled in the idea of a large house,

we soon found ourselves roaming through this mansion like lost souls, not used to being separated from each other by all this space. The girls had always longed for their own rooms. There would be no more arguments, they said, over the sharing of closets and bureaus and the discomfort of sleeping together in the same bed. But it wasn't long before they realized how lonely it could be sleeping all by themselves with no one to speak to in the dark after the lights were turned off. By morning Elane and I would find them piled together in each other's beds where they had taken refuge during the quiet hours of the night, so frighteningly still compared to New York City where the ear was always attuned, as you lay in bed, to the sound of people still about on the streets, and any of your disquieting thoughts would be gently soothed to rest, like a fretting child held close to its mother, by the soft pulse of the big city.

We were all finding that once you've been a New Yorker you are so provincial, sad to say, that it's hard to become anything else. But our transplanting adjustments soon passed. And when we were settled—the kids in their schools, Elane in her house, and I in my new job with the King County Juvenile Court and Youth Service Center, where I was working with juvenile delinquents, a refreshing change in some ways from a college preparatory school—we were at last ready to get our wolf.

I had decided to get a cub rather than an adult wolf, and not only because it was the best way to get Elane to accept the whole idea. A wolf cub was naturally safer. The children could play with it as they might with a baby puppy. Most of all I wanted an unprejudiced wolf—one with a mind free of any of the bigoted notions that might

be put there by either man or animals. Not even the mother wolf should have the chance to get in a bad word about human beings. This meant I had to get a wolf cub as soon as it was born.

But where do you find a wolf?

My search began by writing all over the country and visiting zoos and animal farms. Everywhere I turned I was told that our experiment wouldn't work, or warned that it was much too hazardous. "Once a wolf always a wolf," I was admonished. "They're too wild to tame," said others. "They might be safe when they're young, but just wait till they grow up. They'll turn on you." An animal trainer exclaimed when he heard I had children, "With kids around? Never!" A woman who owned a malamute kennel had actually tried to raise a wolf, but admitted that she had to destroy the animal because he couldn't be tamed. When she heard that all my children were girls and that two were already mature, she took me aside and gravely confided, "I'd be careful with a wolf around menstruating girls." A friend wrote and suggested that I read an authority like William Mowery, a staunch ally of the wolf who had only lately published a book called *Swift in the Night* in which he had something to say about raising wolves as pets. I did. Mowery wrote, "Nobody except a trapper or persons living in lonely country should ever consider having a wolf pet."

Elane became alarmed with these reports. She finally came out with her feelings one night after the kids were in bed and we were sitting around a crackling blaze in the living-room fireplace. The damp rainy season had set in for the winter and a dancing fire was the surest way to drive away the gloom. "I know how much this means to you," she

said, "but don't you think it's best to drop the whole idea? All these people can't be wrong. Say something should happen to the children. We'd never forgive ourselves."

"I'm not saying all these people are wrong," I replied. "Quite the contrary. They all may be right, that is, given the special circumstances under which they observed or knew the wolf. If you looked into it you'd probably find that the wolf was always caged, somehow never handled like a real pet, as you would a dog in the home. Lock up a wolf, or a dog, or a man, and you get a mean creature. It's an unfriendly act that breeds unfriendliness. We are only now discovering this truth today, as seen in the new directions being taken in modern penology."

"But there's always that chance," said Elane, looking apprehensive. The darting shadows from the flames added a sadness to her drawn face.

"All right," I said. "I'll tell you what I'll do. At the first streak of meanness in the wolf, out he goes. How's that?"

"That's not the only problem," said Elane. "It's this house with all the Rausches' nice things." She got up and began to walk around the room, pointing out the furnishings like a docent at an art museum. "That Wedgwood vase, this early stoneware china pitcher, all the bric-a-brac on the whatnot here in the corner, and over there that blue Delft glass . . ." She threw her hands up. "All the rooms are the same, full of lovely things. How I hate living in somebody else's house."

Dejected, she sat down by the fire. "It's bad enough having kids in a place like this," she sighed, "but with two big dogs barging around, and now a wolf! I give up. This house will be ruined."

"Now, don't get dramatic," I tried to advise. "The thing

to do is to put all the fragile things away so they won't get broken."

"And have the house look like a barn?" she scorned. "You might as well store all the lamps and rugs and furniture too. Then we'll all be in a cage. Isn't that what cages are? Nothing but the bare floor and the four walls?"

"What's bugging you is the house, not the wolf. Sure, I'd rather have our own place too. If anything gets broken, it's ours, not somebody else's."

I poked the fire to stir the flames. "I don't know, but it seems to me we've always had our share of animals and problems, no matter where we've lived," I reflected. "I guess you learn one thing. When you have animals you have problems, that's for sure. The same goes for kids. People who don't like kids mixed with problems, or animals mixed with problems, shouldn't have either. Animals break things, chew things, and they're usually the things you like most. You swear at them. You feel like killing them. Yet you love them too. Remember Maggie," I reminisced, "that cute little mutt we got when we first moved to Jane Street? He chewed holes in all our blankets. There wasn't a blanket in the apartment that he didn't chew big and little holes into."

A smile moved across Elane's lips.

"Then there was Dorki on Bank Street," I continued. "How could anyone ever forget good ol' Dorki! He was our favorite pet, but he drove us crazy, chewing extension cords so that we never had any lights. How we sometimes wished he'd bite into a hot wire and learn his lesson. Well," I said, "it won't be any different with a wolf."

We sat quietly gazing at the ebbing flames.

"You know it's funny," I said. "You think back about those days and you see all the problems you had, yet you

remember only the good feelings." I turned to Elane.
"They were pretty good days."

She moved closer to me. Warm, tired, smiling, she slipped her arm under mine. The fire was some faint light far off on the dark horizon.

4 Answers to my letters started to come in from all over the country, in-

cluding several from people who had spare wolves they were ready to sell at prices ranging from \$75 to \$200 each. But they had only grown animals.

Then I heard that the Tacoma Zoo had a litter every spring. Tacoma is less than an hour's drive from Seattle. This was perfect. We could get a baby wolf as soon as it was born, that is, if they would sell me one. The policy of some zoos is not to sell animals to local people or to anyone not legitimately in the business of keeping wild animals. I decided to go down there and get my bid in early. Perhaps, I thought, if they saw our two big Alaskan malamutes they would be impressed enough to believe that if I could take care of such brutes, I could take care of a wolf.

I piled Sitka and Ootak into our station wagon and drove to Tacoma. The children stayed at home. I decided they would be more of a liability than a help in clinching a deal. The people running the zoo might not take to the idea of wolves and children fraternizing together outside animal cages.

My appointment was with the animal supervisor, who was a big strapping man with kind eyes and a warm handshake. As I had hoped, he was impressed with our dogs and we talked about the similarities between wolves and malamutes. I left the dogs in the car and we went up to the wolf pens, located on a small hill close by.

"Here's a pair that has them every year like clockwork," he said, stopping in front of a cage containing two Mackenzie Valley wolves. The small lettering in Latin below the name on the cage said *canis lupus occidentalis*. My mind quickly flipped through the reference books I had on the wolf. The Mackenzie Valley wolf—one of a family of great wolves, along with the Alaska and British Columbia wolves. The largest in North America, some weighing as much as 175 pounds, with a total length of more than eight feet!

The female lay luxuriously stretched out on her side, resting at the far end of the pen, while the male trotted noiselessly on thick padded paws back and forth along the wire fencing. "Trotted" is probably misleading, for the word conjures up the jaunty movements of the dog, so unlike the almost floating, airborne quality of the animal I observed drifting before my eyes. He was about five feet long, and with his massive shoulders and powerful jaws with daggerlike fangs, he was most imposing indeed. Frightening might be more honest, if I had to admit the feelings stirring inside of me.

"My God!" I said to myself, picturing this beast in our living room. "If Elane were here, the deal would be off. Thank goodness we're starting out small with a baby cub."

The pair were strikingly beautiful specimens whose appearance was quite unlike the more commonly known gray wolf. On the legs and hindquarters were the unmistakable pale cinnamon-buff markings, with the color brighter still on the back of the ears and along the ridge of the pointed nose. The underbelly was a delicate white fawn with the fur darker on the sides and the back from the long black-tipped guard hairs. The loosely hanging tail had the black patch marking the scent gland. Most dramatic was the majestic head framed in a bristling collar of fur and the slanted cold yellow eyes set so close together that they startled you, like the muzzle of a double-barreled shotgun aimed directly at you.

"They're beauties," I said, my eyes fastened on the big male coursing steadily about the cage, relentlessly pursuing his dream of finding somehow, someday, a way of escaping with his mate from this inglorious confinement.

"Where did you get them?" I asked.

"They're from a zoo in Calgary, Alberta. They were born there. But the parents came from the wild, some place way up North in the Mackenzie River Valley territory. Yeah," he nodded, "they're a real nice pair. Right now in the winter they show up best with their full coats. But in the summer they look like hell. Like the moths got 'em. Almost clean naked. You kind of feel sorry for them."

"They don't look much in love," I said.

He smiled. "Give 'em another month and see. She's due in early February and the young come in April. Wolves carry them about the same as dogs, but their heat

period's longer. Almost twice the dog's. And do you know, it's only during five of those days that the female is fertile. How do you like that? And no one but the male knows which days those are. There's a smart guy for you. A lot smarter than me," he laughed. "It took me three years to get our first kid, a boy." He nodded toward the male wolf as he passed by in front of us and asked, "You sure you want one of those in your house?"

I returned the sly twinkle in his eye. "Just a wee bit smaller, if you can," I said. "In fact, I'd like to get one that's newborn."

He toyed with his chin, massaging the end. "Now, that's going to be a little problem. I could use a long rake and pull one out as soon as it's born. The mother would be too weak to fight me off. Now you sure you want one?"

Our eyes met for a moment. "I've waited a long time," I said, "and that's what I'm here for. I want to find out the truth about this animal. This is the only way to do it. I know some people will think I'm crazy."

He roared with laughter. "You crazy? Hell, what about me? I'm the crazy one stickin' around with all these animals. But I like animals. All kinds of animals. I've been working here for ten years. My wife's side of the family keeps giving me the old needle." He gestured, pumping his fist back and forth. "They say to me, 'Jeezes, Joe, what kind of job is that, working all day putting the feed into one end and carting off the crap from the other?' What can you say to bastards like that?" Joe's rugged face became solemn as he thought to himself. Then he said, "I'll see that you get your wolf."

It was hard to contain my glee. "Thanks so much," I said. "That's real great. Now I can go ahead with my plans." Then I paused, worried. "But what are you asking?"

"For one as young as that, and with no shots or nothing, thirty dollars. How's that?"

"Fair enough," I said, overjoyed, for I had expected to pay more than that.

"Now let me give you some advice," Joe said. "But I don't want you to think I'm pushing you. I know how you feel and what you're trying to do. So I've got to warn you. You're taking a big chance getting only one baby wolf. It could get sick. It could die. Lots of things could happen to it. You never know. Taking them away from their mother like this is rough on 'em. If I were you—and I'm only telling you what I think and you can do what you want—but if I were you, I'd play it safe. I'd take two cubs."

"Two!" I exclaimed. Now I was picturing a pair of big wolves in our living room. "My wife would kill me!"

He turned to me with sympathetic eyes. "Your wife don't like wolves?" he said as though he were consoling an inveterate boozier whose spouse couldn't stand the sight of a bottle.

"Oh, she's beginning to warm up to them, but one is about all she can take. It's taken a lot of talk getting her this far. Anyway, that's sixty dollars," I added. "That's more than I'd figured on paying."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. You pay for only one. But you take two and train two. If they live, you give us one back. I wouldn't mind having a pet wolf around here. If one of them dies, you can keep the other one. OK?"

Joe's warning had struck home. With this attractive offer, I couldn't refuse. "OK," I finally said. "I just hope it's OK with my wife."

5

It wasn't OK with Elane. She hit the ceiling. But there was little she could

do about it now. We had gone this far and there was no turning back. When she finally calmed down and I was able to explain what the man at the zoo said, she acknowledged the wisdom of his proposal and finally, I must give her credit, accepted the fact.

But Karen was outraged. Here she was a senior in high school and trying hard to be accepted in her new school and make friends in a strange community and her family decides to bring not just one but two wolves into the house.

"How stupid can you be?" she complained, stomping around the house. "I'll be too embarrassed to bring any friends home. Oh, you've gone and ruined my whole career."

"Don't be silly, Karen," said Jana, who, as a naïve fresh-

man, had yet to experience the full tyranny of adolescent conformity. "If I like a friend I don't care if her family raises baboons. You talk about your race prejudice, Karen. What about wolf prejudice? I think it will be great fun having two baby wolves in the house. Anyway, we were planning to get baby puppies from Ootak till she got sick and all her puppies died."

Jana was referring to a strange illness that had suddenly struck Ootak just before her time of delivery. All her babies were born dead, and she was left with a partial paralysis of her rear legs. The promise that we might soon have a baby wolf had helped dispel the gloom over this misfortune. Even Thane, who was now eleven, had begun to feel differently about having a wolf in the home, especially since the wolf was to be a helpless whelp, not some monster ready to swallow her up; and Darien, before any of us, had feverishly gone to work to get ready for the big event. She had dragged out all her dolls and doll bottles, and was busily feeding her babies.

The prospect of getting two baby wolves, rather than one, only added further turmoil to the domestic scene. Perhaps having a few boys instead of all girls ready to play mamma would have made it easier. The way the girls carried on during the weeks that followed you'd have thought they were all shortly to be blessed with offspring. Even Karen, with all her protestations, couldn't finally avoid succumbing to the virulent epidemic of maternity that ran through the family. Any lurking doubts about having a wolf in the house had disappeared. We were going to have babies, albeit, wolves. That's all that mattered.

As a natural consequence, a shopping spree began for an appropriate wolf layette. Elaborate lists of baby wolf needs were worked up till the late hours of the night only

to be checked off by frantic buying during the day: baby blankets, boxes of cotton, baby oil, swab sticks, nursing bottles and nipples—everything, it seemed, but the safety pins and diapers. There were even tiny ornaments: dangling teddy bears on red ribbons, fancy baby rattles, and a little toy trumpet that actually tooted—all to hang on a wolf crib fashioned from an empty carton of Old Quaker Oats.

We had said nothing about our wolf project to any of Elane's relatives in Seattle, the secret being shared only by our immediate family at this point. But one of our favorites among these relatives, Aunt Lil, was most touched by our display of love and solicitude for the newborn. She assumed that all the lovely little baby things she saw lying so abundantly about the house had been intended for Ootak's puppies. Now that they had died, Aunt Lil mourned the bitter blow fate had dealt us, and was visibly distressed by all these pitiful little mementos of the tragedy. She knew only one way of brightening our hearts again.

She surprised us by turning up at our house one early morning before breakfast. She just couldn't wait. Beaming all over, her glasses frosty with tears of joy, she rushed into the house and called us together. When we were all properly seated, she exclaimed, "Oh, you'll never guess what Aunt Lil brought for all of you this morning." She teased our curiosity by affectionately patting a bulge under her coat. The hump responded by moving a little, like a mole underground. Aunt Lil patted it a little harder to keep it still.

"I know none of you will ever guess," she bubbled on joyously while the mysterious gift grew more active and began thrashing about wildly under the coat, desperately trying to come up for air. But before Aunt Lil had the sat-

isfaction of bringing her words to a fitting climax, Sitka, who happened to be in the room, got suspicious and went over to sniff the activated volcano that was ready to erupt. With a burst through the folds of the coat a sharp little brown nose darted out and struck Sitka like a snake. Sitka went howling and scurrying in pain and confusion to the far corner of the room.

"Oh, dear!" screamed Aunt Lil, full of fright and consternation. "Did you see what that big brute tried to do to this poor little puppy!" Too late she caught herself. "Oh, dear me. Now I've told you your surprise. Shame on me. Well, here it is." She held the squirming body of a little dachshund high in the air for all to see. "Surprise, everybody! I bought you a baby dachshund!"

No one could say a word. I saw Elane's horror-stricken face. I could almost hear her mind cry out, "My God, no, not another animal!"

The lack of response from the family strangled the warm heart of Aunt Lil. Her face fell, and slowly, almost funereally, she lowered the body of the puppy.

"I thought perhaps since all the puppies died," she said with trembling chin. "But of course, if you don't want it —" Her glasses were completely fogged up now.

We all quickly rallied and ran to her. "Of course we want it," we cried, throwing our arms around her neck. "It's just that it came as such a sudden surprise. We couldn't believe our eyes. Oh, thank you, thank you!" we all sang in chorus.

Then it was that Thane let the wolves out of the bag. Said she, stammering with delight, "Oh, Aunt Lil, now the little puppy can sleep with our wolves."

"Sleep with what?" Aunt Lil's startled eyes pinned Thane down. "Wolves? What wolves?"

Thane withered away into silence and into her mother's arms where she retreated for help.

Haltingly Elane tried to explain. "Yes, Aunt Lil. Wolves. I know it must sound terribly crazy to you at first, as it did to us when we first thought about it, but we felt—that is, mostly Jerry, but of course the rest of us too—that it would be fun. Oh, not really fun; that's not what I really mean. It would be interesting—yes, that's it—an interesting experiment to raise wolves. You see, Aunt Lil, there're so few of them left now, and everybody's always saying they're so mean when they're not, and all that. And, anyway, we thought someone should find out the truth and live with them." Elane faded off into silence.

Aunt Lil rose from her seat as straight as a stick. Her tall shapely body seemed taller than ever, for she had drawn herself as far up as she could, and with a chin as strong as granite and a voice booming like a staff sergeant, she shouted, "I think you are all crazy! And don't think for one moment that I will allow this poor little shivering frightened dachshund to stay here in this house, this wild animal zoo." She turned accusingly to Sitka looking browbeaten in the corner. Then her eyes began to glance around the room with concern. "Where are these wolves?" she asked holding the puppy under her coat protectively.

We were all happy to let Elane continue to be our spokesman. "Well," she said with a little more courage, "they're not here at the moment and they won't be for still a few weeks. You see, we're waiting for them to be born in the Tacoma Zoo. They're going to be babies, not big wolves. There'll be two of them and even smaller than the dachshund you brought us."

Jana couldn't stand Aunt Lil's pained expression and ran over and kissed her. "Oh, Aunt Lil," she cried, "please give

us the puppy. We all want him. Please take him out of your coat so we can see him again. He looked so cute when you held him up. Please do."

Darien edged over to Aunt Lil's side and started to pull the coat open to peek inside. "Dog, dog—baby dog. Please see. Present," she begged.

Aunt Lil glanced down at her and patted her head. Darien's pleadings touched her soft heart. Slowly she began to melt. "I don't know why I should ever try to be nice to you people," she complained. She stared angrily at Elane and me. "You two are nuts, that's all I can say. Wolves!" she snorted in disdain. "You're hopeless!" She carefully unfolded her coat, placed the puppy on the floor before the children, and started to button up her coat again. "Now listen to me," she turned on us. "If you don't take good care of this little dog, I'm going to take him right back to the kennel where I got him and you'll never see him again."

With that final pronouncement she stomped out the front door.

6 At six o'clock in the morning on Sunday, April 19, 1959, the phone call

came. It was Joe, the animal keeper from Tacoma. "Come get your wolves. They'll be waiting for you in the boiler room of the Monkey House."

I ran to announce the news to the family, who were still asleep. "The wolves were born and I'm off to Tacoma to get them!" I shouted loud enough to awaken them. Then I rushed to the refrigerator to get the formula.

Knowing the time was near, I had everything prepared. The tank of the car was kept filled with gas and the oil and tires carefully checked. Also ready and stored in a special carton were a thermos bottle for heated formula, a bath towel to serve as an apron, two sterilized plastic doll bottles and nipples, a small funnel for pouring the formula into the bottles, cotton for toileting, a sterilized pin

in case the nipples got clogged, and a couple of doll blankets for the comfort of the baby wolves. Having the formula ready was a little more trouble. I had to make a fresh batch every day to have on hand to feed the baby wolves when I arrived at the zoo.

I was so excited and nervous the bottle almost slipped out of my hands and went crashing to the floor. "Take it easy," I kept telling myself while I hurried to heat the formula on the kitchen stove. With hands shaking, I poured the hot formula into the thermos bottle, spilling much of it over the kitchen table. By now the family came running into the room in their pajamas and nightgowns. They shouted and mobbed me with questions. Elane was just as excited as the kids.

"Wait till I get back, I'll tell you everything." I plowed my way through them, grabbed a jacket, gave Elane a quick squeeze, threw a few fast kisses to the children, and dashed for the front door with the carton under my arm. The family followed on the run. They waved to me from the front stairs as I leaped into the car and headed for Tacoma at full speed.

Fears crowded my mind while I whirled down the highway like a doctor on an emergency call. Would I get there in time? How long can baby wolves live without food? Would they eat what I brought them? Would they get sick from it? Was the size of the nipple right? How does it compare with the flow of a mother wolf? Would the trip back be too much for them?

I was so preoccupied with these concerns that I wasn't aware what a beautiful sunny day it was till I neared Tacoma. It had grown quite hot and the cool breeze coming up from the Sound lying blue below me was a refreshing gift as it came through the open window.

The Sunday traffic was heavy now with long lines of cars headed for mountains and lakes. Trailers lumbered along with shiny speedboats and trim cabin cruisers. "The spirit of the Northwest," I reflected. "What a different mission from mine. How out of joint I am with all this. I should be going off with my kids too. How the hell is it that I'm not like other fathers?"

The question gave me a sharp twinge of guilt I couldn't put aside. "What good are wolves for kids? Just what are you trying to prove?" I remonstrated with myself. "So people don't like wolves and you're out to show them they're wrong. So what? Who'll give a damn anyway? Some may shake their heads and say, 'Maybe the guy's got something. Anyway it's interesting.' That's all. The next time they go to the zoo they take a closer look. Or they could say, 'Why's he so excited? All that jazz about so few wolves left and it won't be long before they're all gone—well, you can't stop civilization. Look how the whole world's changing. Then there's the atom bomb. My god, we could all go before the wolf!' "

The city of Tacoma loomed up over the hood of the car. "Maybe we animals better learn how to stick together," I mumbled to myself.

Joe met me at the door of the Monkey House and led me down a long dark corridor to the boiler room at the rear of the building. The air was as stifling and thick as a Turkish bath.

"They're over here." The zoo keeper gestured to a shelf of steam pipes running along the wall. "We've kept them warm from the moment they were born," he said. He reached up and brought down what looked like a small shoe box with air holes punched into it. He gently lifted the lid and inside were two little almost-black bodies.

I couldn't believe what I saw could be the progeny of the lordly wolf. "They're baby wolves?" I said in surprise. "Why, they look like a couple of sewer rats!"

They were still wet and their umbilical cords were damp with blood. Both lay quietly asleep on a cushion of rags, their eyes shut tight. Their markings were about the same, like twins. Around the ears there was a slight buff color and each had a white star on the chest. Like most babies their heads were large in proportion to their bodies.

"Look uglier than sin," said Joe. "See their big mouths," he said fitting the tip of his small finger into the wizened muzzles. They slept on, undisturbed by this intrusion. "Here, take one." He lifted the bigger and stronger-looking of the two.

The slight body fit into the open palm of one hand. It couldn't have been any longer than six inches or so. The body began to show a little life. It started to wriggle. It stretched as though waking from a deep sleep. Then the mouth yawned. The white claws scratched like a cat's against the skin of my hand. All at once the baby wolf made a tiny squeak that sounded more mouselike than wolflike.

Joe and I both laughed and I put the baby wolf back in the box.

"You'll notice," said the keeper, "that the other one is punier. I think she was the first one born. Runts like that have a hard time."

"The one I held in my hand looked like a female," I said. "Do you know their sex?"

"You've got yourself two females," Joe chuckled. "Better luck next time."

I could have told him, for bigger laughs, that I had four more back home. Counting Elane and Ootak, six.

"They look awfully skinny to me," I said. "I'd better get some food in them pretty soon. I've got some formula down in the car." I dug into my pockets. "Here, I can pay the thirty dollars."

Joe put the lid back on the box and motioned toward a desk that stood in the corner. "We'll take them over here where I can give you a receipt. Yep, you can feed them now. But you'd be surprised how long they can go without food."

As I left I held out my hand. "Well, I want to thank you for all you've done. I'll take good care of them."

"Don't forget," Joe said when he saw me off from the front of the Monkey House, "we'll be waiting to get one of them back as a pet."

On the way to the car I kept the lid of the box partly open to give the cubs a little more air. The wolf cages were some fifty yards away and I would never have thought about the possibility that the mother wolf would know I had her babies till all at once I heard her mournful voice crying and saw her peering anxiously out of the cage in our direction. I could see she was terribly distressed. I don't know whether she could smell them or heard their mewling cries coming from the box. But she knew I had them. Her pitiful eyes followed us till we disappeared down the hill. Still I could hear her pleading voice calling her little ones back. I felt awful. I could only console myself with the thought that we could give the two baby wolves a much happier life than they could ever have locked up in a zoo all their lives. I made that a solemn vow to that mother crying on the hilltop.

The little ones had become so disturbed by the howling of their mother that they almost leaped clear out of the

box when I got them in the front seat of the car. I could see that it would be impossible to feed them where I was parked. I decided that it was best to drive out of the zoo. I clamped the lid down over their heads and held it firmly while I drove with one hand. About a mile down the highway from the zoo I pulled off to the side of the road where there were no houses around. I didn't want to do any nursing of wolves in public. It would arouse too much curiosity, and frankly, I might find it a little embarrassing. The place where I parked was at least private, if not quiet. It was right at the edge of the road, and streams of cars were now pouring into the zoo by this late hour of the morning.

The day had become stifling hot. The problem was now how to keep the babies cool, not warm, for their little bodies were being racked with panting. They had quieted down so that it was safe to take the lid off and place them in the shade next to me. Now came the real test. Would they drink the formula I had prepared for them?

For months I had been searching for answers to the problem of what to feed baby wolves. What data there was, including what I could glean from zoos, was skimpy enough. I was forced finally to work out the problem myself. As a father of four children you soon learn to improvise. I did the simplest thing. I went to a drugstore and bought some powdered baby food. In making up the formula I added to this some water and the yolk of a raw egg. Heated and strained it was ready for use. But would the baby wolves like it?

Out of my handy carton I took the towel, tucked it under my chin, and let it drape over my lap like a large napkin. I then poured out the warm formula from the thermos

bottle through the funnel into the plastic nursing bottle. Finally I slipped on the plastic nipple. I was ready for the first cub.

I favored the smaller one because she looked so frail and puny. I placed her on my lap, holding her in the cup of my left hand while with my right hand I offered her the nipple. I thought she would grab up the nipple and start gorging, but her response was disappointing. Maybe she needed a little teaser. I squeezed the sides of the plastic bottle, forcing a few drops to fall on her mouth. Still no response. I forced the nipple into her mouth. Now she seemed to eat, for her mouth began the rhythmic movements of nursing. But she stopped after consuming about an ounce of formula.

I returned her to the box and took the bigger baby. Her eagerness to eat was immediate. She grasped the nipple and sucked hard, her little body trembling. In no time she had put away two ounces and would have gone on if I had let her, but I feared that she might stuff herself and get sick.

I started to put her back in the box when I heard the low growl of a police siren come up from behind. A policeman dismounted from his motorcycle and came over to talk to me, mopping his brow and the inside of his hat band with a big handkerchief.

"All right, bud," he drawled, leaning down to peer in the window, his big bulk braced against the sides of the car by outstretched hands. "Don't you read signs? You can't park your car here on this narrow highway." He must have noticed the towel tucked under my chin. "There are a lot of roadstands and eating places where you can have lunch, but not along here. We can't have every Tom, Dick, and

Harry coming by here choosing his own private eating place—”

He suddenly stopped talking. His eyes were fixed on the nursing bottle in my hand. His big fat face went blank with shock and his mouth hung open.

I was seized with panic. “You see, I’m not having any lunch,” I said with a silly laugh and held up the nursing bottle to his face. “I was just feeding some wolves, that is, baby wolves.” I motioned awkwardly to the box at my side.

The policeman’s eyes were now coldly suspicious and his chin had lost all its flabbiness. “I don’t know what’s got you, fella, but you’d better get out of here with this car if you don’t want to get a ticket.”

“OK,” I said. “But you might like to see them,” I said wanting to be vindicated. “They’re real ones. Just got them from the zoo. Bet you never saw anything like them.”

“Did you hear what I said?” he growled. “Now get out of here and keep on moving, do you understand?”

He stood there at the side of the car till I started up and pulled out. I could still see him standing there, staring at me as I disappeared down the road. I suppose I was just one more odd ball cops run into, I thought to myself. Not the oddest, I hope. Well, there are some people who will never like wolves. That cop would rather believe little Red Riding Hood than what I had to tell him.

7 When I arrived home the family was eagerly waiting to greet the

wolves. Triumphant I brought the box into the house and set it on the floor for everyone to see—everyone, that is, except Sitka, Ootak, and the little dachshund whom we had named Hexie. We kept the dogs out so as not to expose the little wolves to any disease. The babies had yet to receive their temporary shots and they lacked the built-in immunity that comes only from the mother wolf's milk.

One at a time I gently lifted each baby and displayed it to the children with the showmanship of an expert animal breeder. "It may be a little hard for you to tell, as it was for me at first," I quipped, "but these are both girl wolves."

The family's initial reaction was much the same as mine

when I first saw the whelps at the zoo. Disappointed and surprised, they couldn't believe that such small creatures could be wolves. Neither did they think the baby wolves were particularly pretty with their scrawny black bodies and shriveled "monkey faces," as Darien called them.

Jana was the only one who felt differently. "Oh, they're so cute," she squealed with joy. "Please let me hold one—the little one especially. She looks so small and sad. Please," she begged.

"If Jana gets one so do I," demanded Thane.

Darien was so excited she didn't wait to ask but grabbed the box with both hands. "Me hold," she said. Luckily I stopped her in time before she dumped the wolves on the floor.

"Now wait a moment," I ordered and set the box in my lap. "I'm afraid we're going to have to follow some strict rules about these wolves. Since these babies have no mother, it's up to us to treat them right and be especially careful with them. That means none of you children can hold them for a while. Only Elane and I will take care of them, just as we would if we had our own little baby. They will be kept in their box in our bedroom with the doors closed to keep out the dogs, and no one is to go in there. These first five days, the man in the zoo told me, will be the hardest for them. Their lives will depend on how well we take care of them. Come, now," I said, as I started to carry the box off to the bedroom. "You may watch me feed them if you promise to be quiet."

"Wait," said Karen, "Here's a present for them." She held out a neatly wrapped package. "While you were gone, Aunt Lil dropped by to see Hexie. She brought a whole shopping bag full of canned dog food. She said she wanted to be sure her little dachshund wouldn't starve.

When she heard you had gone to get the baby wolves and that they were born only this morning and that they were taken away from their mother, she felt so sorry for them that she went right home and got her own electric heating pad she uses for her bursitis. She said it would keep the babies warm just as if they were with their mother."

Elane and I smiled to each other as much as to say, "Well, here's the first friend of the wolves outside of the family."

Having two baby wolves was almost as much work, it turned out, as having twins of our own. Most difficult was the feeding regime. We kept to a four-hour schedule, 10-2-6-10, for our benefit as well as the wolves'. It helped organize our day and it also gave a rhythm to the eating program of the babies. The "demand feeding" philosophy, we feared, might run us ragged and leave the wolves insatiable.

The two A.M. feeding was the toughest. It was my job as "Daddy" to get up, heat the formula, and bring the ready-to-serve bottles to the bedroom. Turning on the lights in our room was supposed to be Elane's signal to wake up and give a hand, but it never seemed to work.

"Honey, wake up." I had to shake her. "It's time to feed the wolves."

"Feed the wolves!" She came up groggy, probably confusing this ungodly hour with the dim past when she had to get up during the night to nurse her babies.

While she moaned and groaned I helped prop her up in bed, laid the towel across the covers, and handed her one of the baby wolves. To make sure she had a good grip, I wrapped her fingers tightly around the bottle and said, "All right. Now you can start."

"What good is it not to have any more babies?" she complained as she fumbled through her task. By the time the wolf had finished, Elane was already slumped back on her pillow, fast asleep. The tiny animal in her lap soon followed "Mamma's" example, nestling in the warm crook of Elane's arm.

After the feeding the babies were toileted. For this operation, we turned them on their backs and used cotton dipped in warm sterilized water. At this early hour of the morning I wasn't always so careful, I must admit, about just how warm the water was when it came to wiping their bottoms. Despite the chilling shock to their rears, they urinated and then defecated with astonishing goodwill and conscientious devotion to duty. The same responsive behavior automatically takes place when the mother wolf licks her cubs. By this method she keeps her den spotlessly clean and her babies healthy and well. We never had the problem of a dirty box where they slept.

After toilet time I dried them off, and if I wasn't too tired by now, I used a little baby oil to keep their skins and matted fur from getting dry. I also washed the eyes with a weak solution of boric acid. Usually, however, I saved these last procedures for the daytime. I was as eager as Elane to get back to sleep at this hour. Finally, I put them back in their box and dozed off to the soft music of their little whimpers and wheezes at the side of our bed.

For the six-o'clock feeding Elane and I both got up ready for our respective chores of the day. It gave us that rare opportunity to be alone that all parents seek and together watch the awakening of the day while the children slept. With blankets draped over our shoulders we sat in rockers by the windows overlooking the Cascades and nursed our little wolves. The resplendent beauty of the early morning

light on the mountains flowed with gentle magic into the room, and the little sounds from the baby wolves came as some strange music of spirits in the air.

Elane liked to nurse "The Little One," as we came to call the smaller wolf. She favored her as a mother might a sickly child. We could tell, in the few days we had her, that she wasn't doing as well as her sister, "The Big One." She didn't seem to be gaining any weight or filling out, and there was always a kind of limpness and listlessness about her that concerned us.

It was on the fifth morning that Elane said to me, "Honey, 'The Little One' worries me. She's not eating well at all. Her last feedings have been dropping off. I think there's something wrong with her. Shouldn't we see a vet?"

"I know," I said. "I've been worried too. Joe, the zoo keeper, said we might have a hard time with her. He thought she was the runt of the litter. But I don't know how seeing a vet would help. We're doing all we can now. All we have is the formula to go on, and 'The Big One' seems to thrive on it. Let's wait a day or so and see."

All the next day Elane kept a special vigil over "The Little One." She kept her wrapped up in a warm blanket and held her most of the time and tried to feed her on and off, but she rejected the nipple. That night "The Little One" looked weaker than ever. At her two A.M. feeding she refused to eat altogether. Then just before six A.M., instead of being awakened by the alarm clock, we were startled out of sleep by a loud piercing wail coming from "The Little One." It was so shrill, so constant, and so frightfully distressing that Darien, who hated all loud noises, had to cover her ears and run back into her room and shut her door.

"She must have colic. She's in real pain," I said.

I phoned the vet at his home and arranged to have "The Little One" down at his office when he arrived.

"She's got colic, all right," he said as soon as he saw her and heard her pathetic cries. "And I don't know if I can help her. At her age it's very hard. All I can do is to give her an injection of demerol to quiet her."

He carried her back to his lab in the rear and after a few minutes he brought her out again. She had stopped crying and lay limp in his hand. "I'm afraid I can't promise much," he said gravely. "She's not a very strong baby. I don't know if she'll pull through."

I wrapped her in the little blanket and laid her at my side on the front seat of the car. She lay motionless except for her mouth that kept opening and closing, as though she were still gasping in pain but couldn't utter a sound.

By the time I reached home, her mouth had shut and I assumed she had gone to sleep from the injection. But when I took her in my hands to carry her into the house, her frail body crumpled limply. I tried to hold her head up but it only fell down again. I played with her paws. There was no response of any kind. She was dead.

The children had gone off to school and only Elane was waiting for me at the front door. I told her what had happened.

"She can't be dead," she cried. "She's probably just sleeping from the shot the doctor gave her. Here," Elane took the tiny body in her hands. She lifted the head, but when she let go, it dropped away and hung down with the eyes closed.

"Honey, I know she's dead," I said. "We ought to bury her before the children come back from school. They're going to feel awful."

"Now, don't talk foolishness, Jerry. I'm going to put her

on our bed and watch her. I'm going to let her rest there. Right now she's just all doped up. I can tell."

Elane never gave up hope till late that afternoon. She waited till the last moment before the children were back from school. By that time the little wolf was cold and stiff.

She finally came to me with tears in her eyes and said, "Yes, she's dead, poor thing. I'm so sorry for her. Now we won't see any more beautiful mornings together."

"Poor old Joe," I said. "I'll have to call him and let him know. There goes his pet wolf."

8 We laid "The Little One" in a sweet-smelling chocolate box and

buried her under the ferns of our backyard, immortalizing this special spot in our hearts by giving the name Kunu, which means "the grave" in Eskimo, to the sister she left behind.

Kunu now became the focus of all our concern, for her time of danger was far from over. Like worried parents we fretted and hovered over her, searching for signs of threatening illness. If they didn't exist, we managed to create them. I was forever reading the anal thermometer, like some ancient seer gazing into a crystal ball for an evil omen, and bedeviling our vet over the phone with all kinds of sinister symptoms and dark forebodings till he tired of my voice and finally lost his customary patience. It was well

enough for a vet who had never raised a wolf in his life to be casual and assured, I thought to myself, but for us, who had to face the daily gnawing uncertainty of just what was the best thing to do every moment for a baby wolf, life was more complicated.

The feeding problem was still the hardest. For one thing there was the formula. Each day I had to go through the time-consuming job of making a fresh batch. I took eight tablespoons of powdered baby food and mixed it with a cup of warm water. I added the yolk of a raw egg and another cup of warm water. Using the eggbeater, I mixed this thoroughly together. I then strained it all into a pint jar that I put into the refrigerator. I had concocted this recipe on my own and I wasn't so sure about it now that "The Little One" had died from colic, which usually comes from a poor diet. As a kind of guarantee, I now started adding a teaspoonful of fresh yogurt, which is one of the most nutritious and digestible of all foods and thus a good protection against colic. It was this diet, heated and warmed for each feeding, that sustained the life of Kunu during these hazardous early weeks of her life.

Kunu became a voracious eater. Within a week her intake jumped from 2½ to 4 ounces, and it probably would have gone higher if I had allowed her to drink her fill. Moderation certainly wasn't her virtue. I was afraid that her stomach, inflated dangerously, like a toy balloon, might pop. A mother wolf could just get up from a nursing position, walk off unconcerned, and have her whelps drop off from the teats one by one through the intervention of gravity. But I had to wrench the nipple from Kunu's mouth to get the bottle away from her. Sometimes during such a struggle the nipple came off and I was drenched from head to foot with sticky sweet-smelling formula. My

righteous anger didn't last long, however, for fear that Kunu's groans of pain following her orgy of feeding might mean that she now had the colic and that it wouldn't be long before she too would be laid under the soft ferns with her departed sister.

"You've got to burp her," Elane, an old hand at this game, scolded.

"Burp a wolf?" I expressed amazement. "This isn't a baby."

"She's a baby wolf," said Elane, "and like all bottle-fed babies she probably gets air in her stomach. If you burp her, she will feel better—and so will you. You'll stop all this worrying."

"But how do you burp a wolf?"

"Just like any baby," said Elane. She looked at me with disgust. "My goodness, have you forgotten so soon—you, a father of four children? Why, you hold the baby up to your shoulders and gently rub or pat the back. You can do the same with the wolf. Don't tell me you don't remember!"

I did remember, but after some experimenting I discovered that gently rubbing Kunu's distended paunch with the tips of my fingers worked better than burping. I figured that in cleaning her baby, the mother wolf nuzzled the stomach with her nose and naturally performed this necessary massage.

Around the seventh day I put Kunu on the floor, for she seemed ready to walk. She started by rocking herself forward bear-fashion on her wobbly legs. She had become such a butter ball that she couldn't keep herself from rolling over and over once she lost her balance. Somehow she always managed to right herself again and go on with her funny shuffling gait. Her heart and soul were in every step she took. Never once did she emit a sound, her effort and

concentration were so intense. By the twelfth day, when her eyes were fully open, she did a little better. Actually she didn't see well till her seventeenth day. But at this time she had to stop frequently to sniff the air for directions before she began to pick her way again like a blind man going down the street. Her eyes had a glazed look and she kept bumping into chairs and tables.

The insecurity of her legs was no indication of their strength. The first day we had her she crawled out of her crib box, which stood more than a foot high over her head. She was able to do this because of her very sharp claws. At twelve days old she was clambering out as a matter of habit. We had to put a foam rubber cushion at the foot of the box so she wouldn't hurt herself when she tumbled to the floor.

It was about this time that Kunu showed her first startled reaction when I suddenly touched her while she was blindly groping her way about on the floor. She cried in pain and terror, as though she expected to be hurt or attacked by some lurking enemy as might happen in the wilds. Once she growled when startled by Elane's sudden and unexpected footsteps coming into the kitchen, where Kunu happened to be. This behavior was probably due to her blindness, or partial blindness, and thus her inability to anticipate or recognize by sight the source of the sudden sound. Since she could only hear the sudden sound, but couldn't see very well and her nose wasn't fast enough to pick up any identifying smell for recognition, she was startled out of self-protection. A cry of pain such as she made could very well have alerted a mother wolf to come to her aid.

The location of Kunu's box right next to our bed allowed Elane and me to hear all the sounds she made

through the night. When she was a week old she barked like a dog in her sleep. She barked even more later on. The twelfth day she was making snarling noises in her sleep, as though fighting. This was accompanied by much thrashing around in the box.

The children had been puzzled from the start by the fact that there were seemingly no noticeable differences between a wolf and a dog. All along they had been asking, "When will Kunu start to be a wolf?" On the day of her first wolf howl, they received their answer. Kunu was waiting early in the morning to be taken out of her box to be fed. Suddenly she raised her little nose in the air and made the most sorrowful wolf howl. Elane and I sat up in our bed enthralled by this primitive music. The children came running into our bedroom from their rooms upstairs where they were awakened by this weird sound of loneliness and despair.

"Now we know we have a wolf in the house," they all cheered. They looked at Kunu with greater awe and respect from then on.

There was other interesting behavior. When Kunu was ten days old she showed her first play activity. While being cleaned after her toilet, she lay back and started to bite her front paws, much the way a human baby does in its crib when it chews its hands and feet and gurgles joyously. She also had a scratching reaction when I rubbed her chin. Her hind leg got going like an ol' hound dog full of fleas, possibly proving that the scratch comes before the flea. Social nibbling or defleaing was also evident when I scratched her body. She reciprocated in kind by trying to deflea me with her gummies.

Between the second and third week there were many new developments in growth and behavior. She was rap-

idly leaving her baby stage and becoming a puppy or cub wolf. With the appearance of the tips of her baby teeth breaking through the gums, she started to bite my fingers and playfully nibble at shoes and pants' legs. The big change came in weaning. We began by mixing small amounts of pabulum into her formula to make the mixture thicker. While Elane held a panful of this gruel I dipped a finger in it and put it to Kunu's mouth like a popsicle. At first she sucked it; then she began to lick it. This was followed by giving her the bottle. It took no more than a day for her to be eating from a dish placed on the floor. We had to cover the floor with a large spread of newspapers, for Kunu loved nothing more than to wade up to her waist in the thick mush.

We now moved the box out of our bedroom into the kitchen and placed it on its side off to one corner out of the heavy traffic of the family. Newspapers were put on the floor for her to wet on. Most amazing to see was her utter ease and tranquillity amid all the scuffling of feet, banging of pans and dishes, and the thousand and one other noises associated with a busy family kitchen. Never did she show the slightest concern or fear. Even should someone step on her toes by accident, she never growled or got angry, which is better than many dogs do. It was always my belief that being so close to the life of the family was a most significant aspect in her early socialization and close attachment to us, so that truly we were her family as much as any group of wolves might be.

As for her health during these early weeks, Kunu, fortunately, never got the colic, but she did get the flu—the Asian flu, of all things—when she was about three weeks old. Interestingly, so did everybody else in the family.

This came at a time when Seattle was having a mild epidemic of the disease, which was hitting many parts of the country with considerable virulence.

At first we thought she had a stuffed nose from the gruel we were using to wean her. She not only waded in so that we had to wash her off after every feeding, but she did some fancy deep-sea diving in it too. She came up gagging and choking for air. The gruel that got packed way up in her nose we never got out, unless she sneezed it out. But we realized eventually that her runny nose was from a cold. And soon we all ended up in bed with sniffles and temperatures. The children put the baby wolf in bed with them and tucked her snugly under the covers. We spent a whole week wheezing, sneezing, and wiping runny noses, the profusest of which was the baby wolf's.

When Aunt Lil found us all in this condition she became alarmed.

"You don't fool with the Asian flu," she said. "But don't worry. I've called my doctor. He's the best man in town. He'll have all of you and the baby wolf out of bed in a jiffy."

"The baby wolf?" I asked. "Kunu should go to the vet."

"Not on your life," said Aunt Lil. "You need a real doctor, not a dog quack! Look what happened to the other baby wolf when you took her to the vet. She died. Do you want the same thing to happen to Kunu?"

"Well, no," I tried to answer her, "but vets know what to do for dogs."

"Well, this is not a dog," she protested. "And my doctor can do better than any vet. Look how he's helped my bur-sitis." She demonstrated by flexing her arm in the air. "I told him how much Kunu means to you and he promised

he would look at her at the same time he examines the rest of you. Now just leave everything to Aunt Lil and don't worry."

In our condition there was very little else we could do. She took over the house and moved in like a full-time visiting nurse, efficiency expert, pharmacologist, administrator, and sergeant at arms. In a way we could be thankful, for she could wait on us, get our meals, and take care of the dogs, especially Hexie, none of whom came down with the illness. But Aunt Lil had the old-fashioned notion that you bring a disease to its knees by a ruthless regime of punishment, even though the patient involved may pass out during the ordeal. She set three rooms aside for us as hospital rooms and put up inhalators going full force like turbine jets so that we could hardly see each other in the dense clouds of steam. The walls ran water and the hot stifling air reeked with camphor and Vicks Vapo-Rub.

While we admired her gallant efforts, we all cheered when she left at the end of the day to get home to her own chores. As soon as she went out the front door her model hospital went to pieces. We all piled out of our beds, temperatures and all, to escape from the hot steam crematoriums for a breath of fresh air. Aunt Lil never knew it, but I also managed to get Kunu off to the vet for antibiotic shots, a secret we solemnly kept between ourselves and Aunt Lil's doctor, who was more than happy to be relieved of adding a wolf to his list of patients.

Kunu has never been sick since. Whether this is a mere coincidence or a vindication of Aunt Lil's vigorous methods of rehabilitation, no one will ever be able to tell.

9

Up until now Kunu had known only human companionship. She was never

allowed to be with the other animals of the house for fear of exposure to disease. Even so, she had weathered some pretty nasty sieges of illness. It wasn't till she had come through the critical days of her early life with success and vigor, and finally received her full complement of baby shots for distemper and hepatitis that she was ready to meet Sitka, Ootak, and Hexie.

Sitka, however, didn't have the slightest interest in meeting her. He rudely rebuffed and rejected her. Little squealing squirming puppies had always seemed to bother him. He felt as embarrassed and awkward as some grown-ups are with babies. Unable to respond comfortably to them, he made it a point to stay clear of them. This is the

way he behaved to Kunu even though she spent what seemed like hours trying desperately to get to him over the great expanses of kitchen linoleum. Whenever she came plodding and puffing in his direction in her comical beer-barrel roll, he was sure to get up in time to escape. Sometimes she caught him off guard, snoozing away in a corner, and slapped a playful paw in his face. With a wild snort he'd jump up and skidoo. You'd think some monster was about to devour him, he looked so frightened.

"I don't think Sitka will ever love Kunu," Jana complained, disappointed. "Maybe dogs don't like wolves as much as dogs. Or maybe they can't have babies together so they don't care."

"No," I said. "Wolves and dogs mate all right, and they have babies. It's happened many times, in captivity and in the wilds. Just wait till Kunu grows up to be an attractive female. Then Sitka will be running after her, not she after him."

"But didn't you once say that wolves can't mate till they are two or three years old?"

"That's usually so."

"You mean," said Jana, "that we're going to have to wait that long before Kunu can mate and we can have babies?"

"Perhaps. Sometimes it happens sooner."

Karen, who was seated nearby reading a book and munching a sandwich, began to shift about uncomfortably, obviously irritated by the sound of our voices and the drift of our conversation.

"When wolves mate," asked Jana, "do they get stuck together like dogs?"

"You mean 'locked,' as scientists say?" I replied. "Yes. This only happens with dogs, wolves, and foxes. It's nature's way to assure fertilization of the egg."

"That's a funny way," said Jana, pondering.

Karen, I noticed, was chomping away at her sandwich with a vengeance and beginning to read aloud to drown out our discussion. It sounded like something from Shakespeare.

"It's not funny," I corrected Jana. "It's different."

"I'm sorry," said Jana. "They don't teach us anything like that in school."

"I ought to get a book for all of you on the sex life of animals," I said. "Those teen-age books on sex don't teach you anything, not even about people. You get a pretty narrow viewpoint if you don't know about the sex life of animals."

Suddenly Karen jumped to her feet and stomped out the room, growling, "God, can't you have your sex talks somewhere else?"

Jana looked up surprised. "What's wrong with her?" she asked.

"I guess we talked too loud."

In contrast to Sitka, Ootak and Kunu took together like mother and child the first time they met. Since Ootak had lost her litter she was hungry for babies, and Kunu, who had lost her mother, was young enough to want another. Our cuddling and love could never compare to the genuine mother's love that Ootak had to offer Kunu.

Ootak chose a special place under our bed where they could be all alone. There she kept Kunu nestled in her warm fur and no one dared come near to disturb this intimate world of mother and child, least of all Hexie, who, as a young pup of only seven months, was eager to make a friend of Kunu. But he soon learned what a low rumble in

Ootak's throat meant, and when she bared her fangs menacingly at him, Hexie took off in a hurry.

Aunt Lil, on a visit one day, observed this threatening behavior of Ootak toward her Hexie. She turned to us, scolding, "The trouble with both of you is that you never teach your children or animals any manners. Just what kind of parents are you?"

When we explained to her how much Ootak needed someone like Kunu to take the place of her lost babies, Aunt Lil became contrite and then mute with sadness. On further learning that Ootak's days might be numbered, she refused to hear any more. It was all too painful for her. After that, she kept away from the house and hardly ever called on the phone. Once, when she did phone, it was only to let us know that she had just ordered a big box of fancy candy from Frederick & Nelson, the best department store in town, "for all your lovely children and animals, God bless them."

"Dear Aunt Lil," said Karen, touched when the box of candy arrived. "She's trying her hardest to tell us how awful she feels about poor Ootak. I know if Ootak were a lovely lady who was dying, Aunt Lil would buy her the prettiest nightgown and negligee in town. But what can you buy a dying dog?" she said, opening up the box of candy and sampling the first delicious bonbon.

If it hadn't been for this new turn of events in the life of Ootak, I don't believe we would have allowed her to live on. The illness that had struck her before the birth of her babies had grown steadily worse. The vet told us she was critically ill and dying of a noncommunicable virus eating away her nervous system. Her numb and paralyzed hindquarters dragged behind her like a dead weight. It was so pitiful to see that we had about decided to have her

put to sleep when this wonderful thing happened between her and Kunu. How could we take this away from them?

As sick as she was, Ootak was still a mother in all respects. It was as though she had just given birth and all the pent-up feelings of motherhood had suddenly burst forth and found her fulfillment in this little whimpering whelp of a wolf curled snugly in her soft belly. Ootak licked Kunu clean like a newborn, and although she couldn't nurse Kunu, for she had no milk, they both went through the ritual as though she had.

It is customary for a mother to clean up all the droppings of her babies while she is still nursing them. When they are weaned, however, and begin to eat food, then the mother no longer continues this practice. But not so with Ootak. Kunu had already been weaned and was now on gruel. Yet Ootak washed up everything after her whenever she wet or dirtied on the kitchen floor. Nor was there any further need to lay down newspapers on the floor to keep it clean. Kunu's newly adopted mother took care of all her personal needs and cleanliness from now on.

Kunu's cardboard box was left deserted and forgotten. She now spent the nights wrapped up in the warm body of a real mother, not in odd bits of old blankets and rags, like some poor waif left on the doorstep. No longer would she cry her little wolf howls when she got sad during the long lonely nights and there was no one to fondle her and soothe her restless hours. Gone were the angry growls of imagined battle. Close to the big protective body of her mother she was now safe and no worries need disturb her.

We could hear both of them under our bed at night, mother and child, their gentle breathing rising and falling like a soft summer wind. Yet we knew all wasn't well with Ootak, for the quiet was sometimes disturbed by her

small cries of pain as the disease ate away at her. If she happened to waken Kunu, Ootak quickly soothed her little baby with tender kisses and warm nuzzles and Kunu was soon fast asleep.

Ootak was fading fast. She could barely pull herself along with her front feet anymore, for they too were getting weak. She spent most of her time resting under the bed, waiting for the inevitable moment when death would come. Finally, she could no longer walk by herself.

Kunu, quick to sense something wrong, did everything she could to keep her new mother alive. She had a whole repertory of games and gambols to intrigue the waning spirit of Ootak. Ootak's eyes would light up momentarily with a flash of love and then fade and become glassy, and her head, too heavy to hold up now, would fall to her chest.

The end came during the night. It was announced by the sad howls of a baby wolf who was to lose another mother. Elane and I turned on the light in our room, and the children, awakened from sleep, came downstairs in their nightgowns to gather quietly at our bedside. Sitka and Hexie, distraught by Kunu's sad howls, stayed at the door looking bewildered.

Gently I pulled the limp body of Ootak out from under the bed, Kunu whimpering and clinging to her dying mother. I could feel the fading warmth of her body and knew Ootak's life was rapidly ebbing away.

Darien came over and pulled at my pajama sleeve. "Sick?" she asked, concerned.

"Yes, very sick," I said, smoothing out Ootak's soft silvery coat, as I tried to explain. "Ootak's dying. We won't see her anymore. Just like 'The Little One.' "

Darien reached down and lovingly patted Ootak's face. "Ootak go away," she said with a faint smile. "Come back.

Maybe someday." She looked up questioningly into my eyes.

Jana began to sob softly. Thane clung to her mother, holding back her sorrow. Beyond, in the shadows, Karen hid her face.

I handed the whimpering Kunu to Elane and then took Ootak up in my arms to carry her out to the backyard, as I had been doing for the last weeks so that she could empty her bladder. She seemed heavier being so limp. Her long full tail hung like some royal plume proclaiming the dignity of the moment.

The family followed behind in a funeral cortege as I carried our dying pet out through the kitchen to the back porch, and then down the rear stairs into the garden. I walked alone into the night with Ootak in my arms while the family watched from the kitchen windows.

It was a beautiful night with a bright moon riding high in the sycamore trees. I found my way to the edge of the garden with the sweet grass chilling my bare feet. Only a few feet away was the grave of "The Little One."

I laid Ootak down on the ground and waited, kneeling at her side, comforting her with a gentle hand. She lay gasping and twitching her head. Then she was still. Her eyes hung in space, staring blankly at the pale moon.

"I'm sorry we can't bury you here," I whispered to Ootak and reached down to remove the collar we would always treasure.

Tomorrow we would take her away to the Humane Society, where she would be disposed of with the hundreds of other nameless animals who die in the city.

10

Kunu didn't stop telling the world about the awful pain in her heart till

some time later when Hexie, who could stand these wails no longer, came whimpering up to Kunu to offer his humble friendship in solace. From that moment on there grew the warmest companionship one could ever imagine between a wolf and a dachshund. Animals need, as much as man, the love of others to sustain them.

Hexie was no pint-sized playmate for Kunu. At seven months old he was almost twice her size. He was also more agile and fleet of foot. Thus when it came to rough play of any kind, Kunu was always the loser.

Their play, like that of most children, started out mildly and harmlessly enough. It usually began with a friendly squabble over Darien's full-sized rag doll, Susie, with

Hexie tugging at one end and Kunu yanking as determinedly at the other. Soon the tug-of-war got out of hand and led to the grabbing of whatever was available in the way of anatomy—such as an inviting ear or tail. Then the free-for-all began in earnest.

Kunu's wobbly legs were so quick to fold that it was no problem for Hexie, with one swift jab, to knock her over with his long dachshund nose. Kunu's potbelly was a perfect target, and once she toppled, her roundness became self-propelling, like a big rubber ball. When she finally recovered her center of gravity, she tried valiantly to lunge right back at Hexie, but she invariably missed and fell flat on her face. This left her all set up for Hexie to finish off, which he did with merciless vengeance till Kunu squealed, "Enough! Enough!"

Battered and defeated, Kunu dragged herself over to the soft cotton body of Susie for refuge and comfort. Hexie was sportsman enough to let Kunu fall asleep nestled on the rag doll while he, still fired by the spirit of battle, went on to wrestle with an uncompromising tennis ball.

By the time Kunu awoke refreshed in body and spirit, the tennis ball had done its work and Hexie was ready for a much-needed nap himself in Kunu's cardboard box. While he slept Kunu enjoyed her big bowl of gruel unmolested. By nighttime both had had it, made their peace with each other, called it a day, and went to sleep the best of friends.

Darien was often a third party in such play. The quality and nature of the fun then took on other tones. Out of self-protection, Hexie and Kunu joined sides, for Darien became a hard antagonist, resorting to such questionable tactics as tweaking noses and pinching bottoms, which neither animal liked and both protested in no-fooling growls.

Finally, to defend themselves, they gave Darien some of her own medicine, nipping her hands and legs so that she soon stopped and came crying to us for sympathy.

Elane and I were at first concerned that Darien's rough play might make the wolf mean. It never did. Kunu learned, as had Hexie, that this was the only way to handle her. Certainly our words of caution to Darien never seemed to help. Animals, it appears, can sometimes discipline children better than their own parents. These set-tos, however, never threatened the warm bond of love and friendship that existed among the three playmates.

Kunu soon tired of having her life restricted to the kitchen, where we kept her most of the time. A new and more exciting world beckoned to her beyond the door that led to the rest of the house. Having sneaked a few previews, she was more determined than ever to explore it. We fought off her advances as best we could till she started stating her case in nerve-chilling notes. We were soon ready to give her a lifetime pass to any part of the house if she would only stop this awful wolf howling.

She had made her point. She was growing up, and if she was to rate a full membership in the family, with equal rights for all, as we professed, then she should be allowed to go anywhere she wanted. The only question was: Were we opening a Pandora's box when we opened the kitchen door?

Elane was prepared for the worst. She had bucket, mop, broom, dustpan, and detergent ready and waiting. She removed everything from the shelves and tables, including an iron bust of Daniel Webster and two World War I trench shells that served as bookends.

"But, honey," I tried to contain her panic, "we're not

letting a horde of elephants come trampling through the house. She's just a plain little wolfie."

Elane was grim and determined. "I'm not taking any chances. If this wolfie runs wild in this house, we'll be finished. Everything broken or ruined we'll have to pay for. It could run into hundreds of dollars."

"All right, if it makes you feel better, I'll keep a strict eye on her," I promised.

But the job turned out to be too much for me to manage alone. Kunu was on the move all over the place like an escapee from solitary confinement. The whole family had to be put on alert to keep track of her.

The house cat, I can guarantee, is a piker compared to the wolf when it comes to exploring new territory. No matter how many times Kunu went over a piece of acreage in the house, she had to reassess it again, just in case she had missed something important—like a small dust particle. No one, not even a Ph.D., could squeeze so much significance out of so little. We soon fagged out trying to keep up with her scholarly meanderings and scientific investigations. All we could do was check out any telltale evidence of what went on in her never-ending search for truth under carpets and behind bookcases.

Luckily, there was very little damaging evidence to convict her, for she spent most of her time downstairs, in the living room and dining room and open hallway, where the pickings were slim after Elane's drastic evacuation, "Operation Wolf," as we called it. Kunu's interest seemed to be more in discovery than destruction. When she finally felt at ease with her new surroundings and there was nothing more to learn, she got the old itch back again to play and bite and chew. We were fortunate then that Kunu had

playmates around. With Hexie to fight and wrestle with, Darien to nip, and big rag doll Susie to gnaw, there was no need for her to take out her oral feelings on any of the furnishings.

There was one activity of Kunu's, however, that couldn't be similarly sublimated. She profusely weed and peed all over the place. All you can do about that is to clean it up and punish the culprit. But we were not always sure that she was the only offender, for we caught Hexie on a few occasions shamelessly regressing in little dark corners. It became quite a skill for us to be able to determine from the size of the puddle whether to incriminate Hexie or Kunu. Unable to resolve the problem, we scolded and punished them both, just to be sure.

Elane was at least partially right. Her mop and pail did come in handy. The score against Kunu and/or Hexie: one large dining-room rug badly spotted and two throw rugs in the living room stained beyond repair—all of which would mean a considerable amount of money out of our pockets when damages were claimed by Mr. Rausch, the landlord.

Elane commented pathetically, "I should've removed the rugs."

I nodded sympathetically, "Instead of the iron bust of Daniel Webster."

After the downstairs was thoroughly worked over by Kunu, she started for the upstairs. The climbing took practice, but after a day's worth she could accomplish the feat. Her efforts paid off handsomely. The girls' rooms turned out to be a storehouse of treasure. There was Darien's room piled high with all kinds of toys and dolls to chew up and tasty colored crayons to massage her budding gums on. The rooms of the older girls had stockings and shoes and clothes that hadn't been picked up from the floor and

put away properly. What a shopping spree Kunu had with Hexie in this bargain-basement department store, pulling apart attractive items for size and durability till there were only shreds left on the floor.

A hue and cry went up from Karen and Jana. In retaliation they let loose an air attack of flying shoes and books that put the enemy in wild retreat with tails between their legs. Finally doors were slammed and Darien alone was still willing to share the booty in her room with Kunu and Hexie.

With the areas of greatest fun upstairs now under strict restriction, Kunu set out to find other resources. She came upon the bathroom and fell into the toilet bowl. She loved it. It was her first bath and she bounced up and down in it like a baby in a Bathinet. But the dictates of culture soon stepped in. It was most disconcerting to go into the bathroom and find the bright-eyed head of a baby wolf poking out of the bowl. Down came the lid on the toilet bowl.

Kunu made a big fuss about losing her private bath. We consoled her by giving her the big bathtub. This was even greater fun. We ran a fast stream of lukewarm water splashing into the tub while Kunu paddled, flipped, and cartwheeled through puddles and cascades of spray, calling her pal, Hexie, to come in and have a swim. But not Hexie. Not with his thin hide. Water stopped him cold. He waited dry and shivering till Kunu came out and then gave chase all over the upstairs.

All the fun was upstairs, but the food was downstairs. Kunu was hungry by now. "Now how do you get downstairs to eat?" Kunu seemed to be scratching her head as she sat at the top of the stairs looking down at the long bumpy path to the bottom. Hexie was no help at all to

Kunu. With a spine like a stick, he had enough problems of his own trying to manipulate stairs.

Kunu sat at the top of the landing crying and begging for help. We were determined that she figure it out for herself. She was game enough to try, first with her front paws down on the first step, but she quickly lost heart when she looked over her shoulder and saw the rest of her still hung up on the landing. How to bring that part of her down without going headlong down the whole flight of stairs had her guessing—and soon retreating back to the landing for safety. Being a bit of a fraidy wolf, it took her some time to solve the problem. Finally, her rump dropped off the landing by accident, which made her front feet spring out to the next step to catch herself from falling. Mastery at last, even with a few bad tumbles and a couple of steps missed.

There was another way to get down much faster. Kunu one day discovered the clothes chute open on the second floor and decided to take a look. Maybe it reminded her, far back in her genetic unconscious, of a wolf den that ought to be investigated. She went in and dropped two floors like a rock to the hard cement pavement of the basement floor.

How she landed and how she felt when she landed, and whether there were any accompanying sound effects, no one will ever know, for none of us was there to observe the accident. All we knew was that Kunu had suddenly vanished, if not from the world, at least from the house. The alarm immediately went out and the search was on.

It took the greater part of a day to find her. Elane happened to go down into the laundry room to fill the washing machine. There she saw the body of Kunu sprawled on the floor under the opening of the clothes chute and realized

right away what had happened. Since the body lay so still on a few dirty shirts, Elane assumed we were about to have a third funeral. Her frightened screams shook the house and brought us scrambling down to the basement. We came to an abrupt halt in the laundry room to gaze horrified at what seemed a tragedy. Then Darien, less impressed than the rest of us, went over and started to pick Kunu up.

"Don't, Darien!" Elane cried out, not wanting Darien to experience the trauma of another dead pet.

But Kunu, apparently having more than the limited nine lives of the cat, rose to her feet in a sleepy stupor, then stretched and yawned. She'd had the most luxurious snooze away from the noisy family.

Not sure just how much a wolf learns from such a dangerous adventure, I decided it was best to nail up the opening of the clothes chute.

11

Now that Kunu was three months old, she was ready, we thought, to be introduced to the world outside. For one good reason, it was time to start housebreaking her, if this could be done at all. She was getting bigger and so were the puddles. She also needed to meet neighbors and make friends if she was to become a respectable citizen of the community.

But what would we tell the world outside about Kunu? Should we admit that she was a wolf or should we hide her identity? The problem struck at a deep philosophical and ethical question that we spent hours discussing. It came down to this: Do you tell the world what you are if it happens not to like you, or is it best to keep it a secret? Or even lie about it?

But could we keep it a secret, even if we wanted to, the way Kunu was coming to look more like a wolf every day?

By the middle of summer she had changed considerably. Her eyes had turned from the lively blue of infancy to a soft sea-green. Her jaws were elongating, giving her the appearance of a fox or coyote. No longer was she potbellied, for her body had become longer and thinner, stretching more than three feet from nose to tip of tail. Gone too was most of her dark fuzzy baby hair. It was now replaced by a light fawn-colored coat. Her tail, mostly hairless up to this time, was now a big soft fluffy bush. Most impressive were her large clodhopper feet, which indicated that Kunu still had much growing to do and would someday be a very large animal.

After a big debate over the question of Kunu's identity, Jana suggested that we say that Kunu was one of Ootak's puppies, the only one of the litter that lived. Kunu resembled Ootak enough, at least to the untutored eye, to pass as one of her offspring.

"I just know a lot of kids will want to play with Kunu," explained Jana. "If their parents don't know Kunu is a wolf, they won't be so worried."

"And all it would take for us to get in trouble is for one kid to get scratched by Kunu," said Karen in support of Jana. "A wolf scratch is worse than a dog scratch, even though it's the same, if you know what I mean."

"But it is telling a lie," I said.

"I don't know what else we can do," said Elane, her feelings torn. "People have such strong prejudices against the wolf. Kunu deserves at least a fair chance. How else can we prove what we believe? Maybe someday we can tell the truth about her."

I had to laugh, suddenly struck by the position we found ourselves in. "Here we are," I said, "trying to tell the truth, but having to be dishonest to do so."

"But I don't want to lie," said Thane, who looked unhappy about the whole idea. "You always said it's wrong. Anyway, it's hard for me when I don't want to."

"Well, honey," said Elane, giving her a warm hug, "if you don't want to, don't. Just don't say anything."

Everyone seemed satisfied with the solution but Darien. She continued to call Kunu "wolf," not "dog." As it turned out, this caused no problems. Since Darien was known to neighbors as a mentally retarded child, they naturally discounted her opinion and considered this just as another evidence of her serious handicap.

Before we officially took Kunu into the outside world, we bought her a collar and leash. We did this not because Seattle had a leash law (which no one observed), but because we wanted Kunu to get used to a leash from the very beginning. We wanted her to become accustomed early to the controlled and limited area of freedom that would be safe for her in a large city. We had to be sure that she didn't run away or get lost and that we knew at all times what her reactions and behavior were to the strange environment of city streets and crowds of people. Our main problem was how to protect the wolf from man, rather than man from the wolf. To do this meant constant surveillance and planning each step of the way, with no possibility for slipups. A leash helped guarantee such protection and the success of our experiment.

It wasn't that we thought that Kunu would hurt anybody. She had shown herself to be much too friendly for us to be concerned about this. Yet it was strange that as much as we wholeheartedly believed this, still our unconscious feelers were forever out searching for clues that might arouse suspicion or doubt. We couldn't help being infected by the virus of prejudice against the wolf that has

lived in man for centuries. We were caught, as a family, between man and the animal he so hated. Some ambivalence was inevitable so that dark questions and simmering doubts kept bubbling up from murky regions of the mind.

Our concerns came out subtly. We began to notice, particularly as Kunu grew bigger, that our dreams became correspondingly rich in wolf imagery. Some of our underlying feelings seeped out in telltale clues of hidden anxieties. A growl from Kunu, for instance, carried more significance than if it came from Hexie or Sitka. We were always more cautious when we offered Kunu food or drink from our bare hands. A clap of her jaws always seemed somehow more ominous. Without being really aware of it, we were living on the thin sharp edge of psychic discomfort, waiting for the day when Kunu perhaps might change.

Most disturbing to us was Kunu's habit of "grasping" a person's arm or leg in her jaws and not letting go, all the while growling menacingly—or what we interpreted as sounding menacing. With her mouth now full of sharp baby teeth, her "grasp" could be uncomfortable, especially on bare skin. Sometimes she held on so tight and long that we had to use both hands to loosen her grip and open her jaws to extricate ourselves. Darien used a more direct and effective method. She just gave the end of Kunu's nose a good hard twist and Kunu promptly let go with a painful howl.

Kunu's grasping habit had begun at a very early age, when she was only a few days old. It seemed to be related to her nursing. She liked to suck my arm even though she had finished her bottle of formula and had a full stomach. She behaved the way some human babies do who have a strong sucking need. Parents frequently give such children what are known as pacifiers, or spongy rubber nipples. I

sometimes thought that Kunu should have had a pacifier too. Some weeks after she was weaned, she happened to find her old rubber nipple on the floor, the one we had used on her bottle. She picked it up in her mouth, carried it over to her dish of soft gruel, dipped it in and rolled it about in the milky mush, and then sucked the fluid off, very much as if she were nursing again. I wondered, had we perhaps weaned her too soon?

This grasping habit seemed also to be related to her expression of love—love, to Kunu, meaning possession. When she held you in her jaws, you belonged to her, much as one holds a loved one in one's arms. After a while we got so used to this peculiar mannerism of Kunu's that when we got up in the morning we automatically offered her our arm in wolf-greeting.

Only later did we learn that this indeed was the way wolves greeted each other in the wilds. This was their handshake, so to speak, or their kiss of love—not kiss of death, as we had first imagined. But how would the world beyond our door take this—our neighbors and the people on the street? Would they understand this behavior as we did?

It was thus with some trepidation that we came to the time of introducing her to the community. What especially worried us was how the children would take Kunu's jaw-clench, with their bare arms and legs so vulnerably exposed during the hot July days when they wore nothing more than sunsuits and T-shirts.

12

It didn't take long for the word to get around that we had a cute little

puppy; children flocked into our yard from all over the neighborhood to meet Kunu. It was a wonderful sight to behold. The children got down on their knees to pet and fawn all over Kunu. No newcomer could have received a warmer reception. To show her appreciation, Kunu thrashed her tail around and whined as gleefully as any puppy dog and grasped them happily in her jaws with greeting. But they had no concern. They took this as an act of affection, as nippy and pinchy as her sharp baby teeth were on their bare arms and legs. If they had known Kunu was a wolf, they probably would have run for their lives. Instead, they stayed and shared their ice-cream cones with this interesting new friend.

Overcome by all this outpouring of love for her, Kunu grew weak and folded on the lawn in surrender, spraying lively fountains of urine high in the air. Wild squeals of delight went up from her young audience. This response of Kunu's, which always occurred at such intense moments and which said how much she loved them all, soon became her trademark. When the children came in the house to play with her, she wet the carpets so badly that it became a real problem. Since her performance so delighted the children it made it more difficult to house-break her. Later, we would take her out on the leash to go in the yard, like all good dogs should, and she would have nothing left to go with. All had been recklessly spent in the service to the heart.

With neighborhood children congregating in ever larger numbers to play with Kunu, the place took on a gay nursery-school atmosphere. Kunu just loved it. She especially enjoyed the fun and excitement of being pulled around the rooms in Darien's little red wagon like some Queen of the Wolves. She also loved being chased by the children or going lickety-split after them in games of tag and hide-and-seek. Elane finally had to step in and put a stop to the fun before the house collapsed in shambles.

Of all the children who came to visit, the one closest to Kunu's heart was little Timmy, a redheaded, freckled-faced, three-year-old boy who lived with his family across the alley from us. We weren't sure at first just what it was that attracted them to each other. We thought perhaps it was because Timmy, the youngest of twelve children, had very little chance to love or be loved by anybody, and therefore sought out Kunu for his very own.

There was no doubt but that Timmy was neglected.

His father worked during the night and his mother during the day, so that Timmy saw very little, if anything, of his parents. Jenny, his sweet-smiling ten-year-old sister, tried to be a good mother to him, but it was a role much bigger and more demanding than she could handle. In the scramble to get off to school and work in time, Timmy's family had very few precious moments to spare for his needs. Neither could Jenny, as conscientious as she was, always find time to help him. The result was that Timmy never got properly clothed or fed. We could look out our back kitchen window almost any early morning and spot little Timmy all by himself in the rear alley, often naked, except for an undershirt, even on cold days, and munching a crust of bread and jelly he happened to salvage from the breakfast table.

Kunu's interest in Timmy couldn't help but remind us of the story of the wolf children of India who were mothered by a she-wolf in her den in the forest. The poverty in some Indian villages was so great that starving parents were unable to feed their babies. Rather than have them die in their arms, they took them to the edge of the jungle and left them there, praying that the good spirits would come and take care of them. The good spirits sometimes turned out to be love-hungry she-wolves who adopted the children as their own. The facts of one such case—an account of two children of Midnapore, Bengal, India, documented and photographed by the Reverend Singh—were corroborated by no less an authority than Dr. Arnold Gesell, Director of the Yale Clinic of Child Development.

This theme of the desertion of children by poor parents is contained also in many stories of Western Europe, notably the tale of Hansel and Gretel by the Grimm brothers.

There is also the well-known classical story of Roman mythology of Romulus and Remus, who were nursed by a mother wolf. Other such accounts of she-wolves succoring abandoned children have been told. The notion is not farfetched. It is known that wolves and foxes are very possessive of the young—not only of their own, but also those of other females—and will steal them away if given the opportunity to do so.

We ourselves could recall the time we had two baby foxes one summer in Vermont. We left them out in a cage one night and were astonished to find, when the babies began to cry, how many foxes suddenly appeared. We never had any idea that there were so many foxes in the countryside. Many of them must have come from great distances. From every nearby bush came the answering sobs and pathetic barks of distressed mother foxes, lurking to steal the babies and take them off to their dens. Some were so bold as to come up to the door of the house and try to get the baby foxes out of the cage. Being unsuccessful, they stood by the cage and moaned their hearts out for the little ones inside.

While little Timmy's neglect was not as grim perhaps as that of the starving wolf children of India, his plight touched everyone in the community. Yet no one thought it was his or her responsibility—no one, that is, but Kunu. Or so we thought until we discovered that Kunu's interest in little Timmy was more than that of a kindly wolf with a foster-parent conscience. Timmy served as a practical snack bar for Kunu. He was always liberally smeared with sticky food and jellies and jams that no one in his family had gotten around to wash off. What Timmy's family failed to do, Kunu's tender tongue did most thoroughly

and with the most heartfelt appreciation, down to the last sweet crumb.

Some weeks later Timmy's family moved away and we never saw him again. When he left, Thane said, "Little Timmy should move to India. It's warmer there and the people would let the wolves take care of him."

We, ourselves, meanwhile, had come under the critical observation of another neighbor. Mrs. Wickstrom, who lived next door, was known as a kind of neighborhood grouch. She lived by herself, and the word was that some ten years earlier her husband, fed up, had cleared out, taking their kids with him. She appeared to spend most of her time alone in her garden when she was not working at her part-time job in the office of an oil company. Being a big fat woman, she melted like exposed butter in the hot sun when she worked with trowel in hand, puffing and perspiring, in the flowerbeds of her backyard. Boys of the neighborhood liked to tease her by calling her "Mrs. Wacky," because she got so furious at them when they climbed her fence to cut through the yard. The more Mrs. Wickstrom protested, the more fun they had in trying to sneak through her place without being caught.

It had to be our luck that Mrs. Wickstrom's closest friend happened to be our landlord himself, Mr. Rausch. That had been reason enough for her to resent our moving next door. But more than that, she had disliked our animals on sight, considering Sitka and Hexie an even greater potential menace to her garden than the neighborhood boys. And now, when it became apparent that still another "dog," Kunu, had joined our household, Mrs. Wickstrom seemed to lose patience with the whole menagerie. Worse than that, she got inquisitive.

We became concerned when we learned that Mrs. Wickstrom was carefully questioning the girls, especially Thane, about Kunu. Thane held her ground and didn't say a word, as awful as she felt about not being able to tell the truth. But that didn't stop Mrs. Wickstrom from commenting pointedly on how much Kunu looked like a coyote or a wolf, and weren't we struck with the resemblance? This question had occasionally been asked by others, but in Mrs. Wickstrom's case it seemed less than innocent, somehow.

We suspected that Mrs. Wickstrom was carrying on a lively correspondence with Mr. Rausch about our every move, for the occasional letters we received from him indicated a direct leak. We were worried that if she found out the truth about Kunu, it would bring our whole experiment to an untimely end.

After all, we had to admit, what landlord wouldn't make a fuss to hear that he had a wolf as a tenant in his house?

13

By the end of the summer Kunu was doing so well on her daily walks

to the park that we were wholly unprepared for a sudden and dramatic change of events.

We always took Sitka along on these walks because of his age and experience. He was much better than Hexie when it came to showing Kunu how to take to the leash and go to the toilet. Kunu at first was perhaps a little shy and spent more time exploring and observing everything around her than a dog would, but with a little patience and urging she finally followed along. We felt very proud of her, especially since experts on wolves have always claimed that the wolf can't be trained on the leash like a dog. Most certainly not in the city. In the woods a disturbed leaf or a bent twig might be a source of con-

siderable suspicion and concern to a wolf, but in the city an animal with such a highly tuned nervous system would, according to the experts, go mad.

Perhaps that is what Kunu actually did at this time. All at once she went into a period of panic and began to behave like some unknown strange animal. Our pride turned to bitter defeat.

For Kunu, the city streets now became a nightmare and our walks a source of terror and confusion. Everywhere she turned she heard threatening sounds and saw frightening visions of danger. To get her out of the house I had to drag her by the leash down the front steps and into the yard. There she clung to the earth with her powerful paws, shaking in fear and refusing to go a step further. It was as though her genetic heritage of a highly acute sensory perception had run afoul an environment it couldn't cope with. Her fragile nerves were hammered by thousands of demanding sense impressions. Unable to sort out or absorb them, her brain suffered the confusion of a switchboard that has suddenly been plugged in wrong so that all sorts of strange messages flood the lines and jam the wires. The result was panic and confusion, with all the accompanying emotional states.

"Why this change?" we kept asking ourselves. Up till now we had exposed her to all kinds of sounds, smells, and sights in the house and outdoors. We made this a conscious practice from the very first day we got her, believing that such early experiences would accustom her to the environment of home and community. What, then, happened?

The only answer we could arrive at was that her panic was due to the developmental changes taking place in her central nervous system at this time, in keeping

with the genetic patterns of heredity, preparing her, as a wolf, for the kind of life she would lead in the wilderness, not in a large metropolitan city. Kunu was suffering from a too abrupt historical thrust into a stage of domestication that takes some wild animals many years to accomplish and only after a long intricate process of selective breeding by man, as with the dog. If this was happening, no wonder she was in serious difficulty.

Change of any kind now threw her into a wild frenzy. The neighbor's old Chevy parked in the wrong spot sent her into fits of concern. A strange car on the block pressed the panic button inside of her and she went berserk. The sudden bark of a dog, the cry of a cat, or the slam of a door and she spun around and rushed for the safety of the house. Even the familiar voices of children she knew could frighten her to death when she heard them down the street. There wasn't the slightest chance of getting her to go to the park anymore. From now on I had to carry her. Even so, she trembled in my arms.

Elane and I couldn't help but remark about the amazing correspondence in the symptomatology of Kunu and Darien. We could see many of Darien's traits as a brain-injured child with central nervous system disorders, or what is called the CNS child, reflected in Kunu's behavior: panic, perseverance, distractibility, obsessional states, catastrophic reactions, phobias, and tantrums. They weren't going on all at once or all with the same intensity in Kunu, any more than they were in Darien. But the same patterns were there in Kunu, showing themselves every day in one form or another.

Darien clamped her ears shut with her hands to drown out the din around her when it became more than her senses could handle. She closed her eyes tight and ran to her room

to hide if there was too much going on about her, such as crowds of people. Like Kunu she was thrown by any changes in her environment. Transitions from one situation to another were always hard for her, even impossible. Caught in a strangling web of frustrations and defeats, she fought back and screamed in protest, throwing wild tantrums. Fears and phobias, once attached to certain things, places, or people, kept repeating themselves, like a broken record, and were hard or impossible to dislodge. Her world always hung on a thin thread. What might be some small trivial personal or physical hurt to a normal child became a major catastrophe to her, as though the thread had snapped and the world had crashed to destruction.

It was only a few years ago that such children were lumped in the general category of "bad" children, as though they had control over their behavior and were intentionally difficult. They were the bane of all schools and school systems because they were so much trouble and were so hard to handle, just the way Kunu was at this time. They didn't last long in school, for they were quickly kicked out. Most of them ended up in institutions where they didn't belong. We now know that these children, many of whom have average or even superior intelligence, can learn and be good citizens if given the right training and education under the guidance of teachers specially trained to help them order their world of confusion and conflict. And it had always been our hope that, as Darien got proper training and special schooling, many of her problems would abate, and she would be able at last to make some peace with herself and the world about her.

In fact, at the very time that Kunu went into her period of panic, the subject was much on our minds, for we had

been concerned about Darien's schooling. And our concern was leading us—me, in particular—into new challenges.

In New York, Darien had been going to a very good professionally run school for mentally retarded children in the Bronx. But that first year in Seattle we had found that the public schools had no place for such children and that the only facility available was a parent-run play group that had not proved wholly satisfactory. I had recently decided I could set up a school that would do much better, and at this point, plans for the school, which was to be launched in the fall, were occupying all my spare time. It was not an ideal time to take on any additional time-consuming problems—such as a disturbed wolf.

Having Kunu behave so much like Darien was like having two brain-injured children in the home. But thanks to what we had already learned from our experience with Darien, we knew that if Kunu was to recover, she would require the same thoughtful handling and special care we had given our child. Slowly and patiently, step by step, we had to help Kunu order this world that was making her life so painfully unhappy at this time.

The first thing I had to do was to give up the notion of taking Kunu out with Sitka during the day. Instead we went for our walks alone late at night or very early in the morning when the city slept and all sensory stimuli were at a minimum. I knew that it would be only by gradual and laborious stages, over a period of months perhaps, that she would be able to integrate this strange world that threatened her. Only by a slow exposure to a few sense impressions at a time would Kunu conquer her fears and panic. It took all of a week, for example, to get her to go

down one street near the house where a new mailbox had been installed at the far end.

The quiet night was a great healing balm to Kunu. Capitol Hill, like most of Seattle, was tucked in bed by 10 P.M. No one was on the streets, and only an occasional auto came and went, so that the night belonged just to Kunu and me.

I enjoyed these nightly excursions at first, but I must admit that as the long hours and days of therapy went on, I didn't look forward to them with the delight that Kunu did. After a hard day's work at the Youth Service Center—even after School started I continued my full-time job there—and attending to the business of the new school in what time was left, I was more ready for bed than a long wet foot-haul into the night. The cold steady rains of fall and winter had arrived in Seattle and the weather was always miserable. The thought that I had to get dressed in rain hat, slicker, old pants, and rubber boots to take Kunu out into the wet night was enough to make me want to stay close to the warm fireplace at home and never move an inch.

"Tra-la," Elane waved to me from the sofa by the fire where she sat all curled up with a book and a box of candy. "You're the one who wanted the wolf."

I slammed the front door going out.

The prospect was that the walk would be long and tedious, for while I saw very little in the darkness to intrigue me, Kunu had a radar system that missed nothing. When she heard something, perhaps nothing more than a faint sound or shuffle coming from a house we were passing by, or the brush of leaves in the wind overhead, or the throb of a car far off, she spent endless minutes taking it

all in, absorbing each item with profound reflection and carefully filing it away in her brain.

Her ears seemed to have a thousand frequencies, better than the best hi-fi. There appeared to be no sound, no matter how elusive or fragile, that the delicate transistors of her brain couldn't reproduce in impressive stereo. But when it came to following what went on with her sense of smell, I was lost. With my illiteracy in this area, I had no chance at all in trying to decipher an ancient language long lost to man.

It took an inordinate amount of my patience to put up with all of Kunu's silly sniffing and snuffing while I waited for her, leash in hand, in the downpour of rain. She had to smell everywhere, not just here and then there, like a jaded dog. She vacuum-cleaned every bush, lawn, tree, sidewalk, and curb with her hungry nose. I could see how easily a hunter or trapper out in the lonely woods could misinterpret such obstinate curiosity of a wolf on his trail as an attempt on his life.

Sometimes I lost my patience and yelled at her, "Damn you, come along. I'm not going to wait all night!" And I dragged her with the leash till she coughed and choked. Then her sad pleading eyes met mine and told me what a heel I was—I, who was supposed to be her therapist.

We were soon back to the old snail's pace.

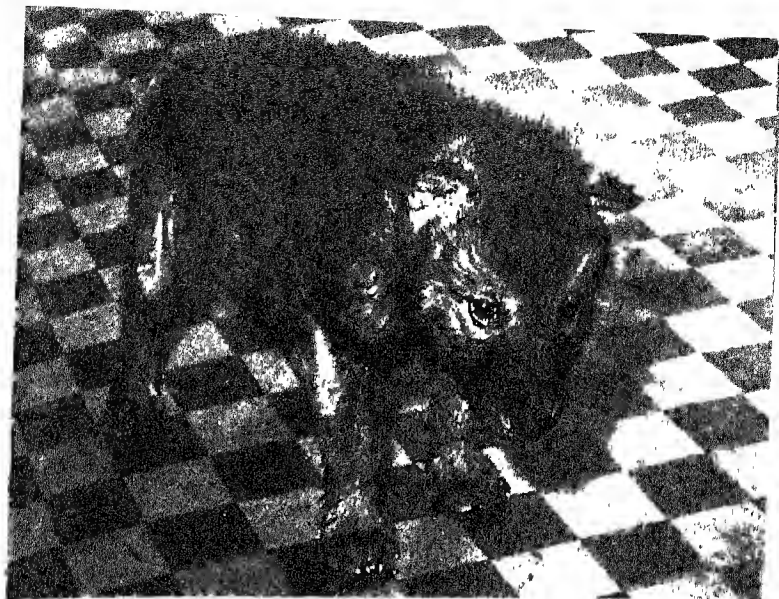
Many times, in her investigations, Kunu found interesting loot left on front lawns and sidewalks by forgetful children: toy trains, dolls, blocks, rubber balls, whistles, coloring books—enough to stock a corner of a large department store. After considered inspection of each item, Kunu finally made up her fickle female mind and carried her choices back to the house to be consumed at leisure or

stored away in her favorite hiding place, the big woodbox next to the fireplace. Soon this treasure chest was overflowing with all sorts of playthings that Kunu shared with Hexie during the day.

But sometimes she would decide it was too much bother to haul her finds back home; she would plunk herself down right in the midst of our walk and complete the operation there and then with her scalpel teeth. Now came the minutes of waiting, which were most grueling of all, for Kunu took a kind of Mayo brothers' pride in her surgery. Only she never knew when to stop dissecting; the poor patient always ended up in a clutter of gory fragments. The only way I could justify this waste of time was that such play therapy might help in the rehabilitation of her distraught soul. Here was her chance to get rid of all her hostility and frustrations against man and his stupid world.

Eventually I too was caught up in this spirit of finders keepers, not knowing just what valuables this game might turn up next. It happened the night Kunu found a coin purse bulging with a wad of bills. I was a little slow at first in noticing what was going on. By the time I did, she had already done away with a good half of the wad of what turned out to be all five-dollar bills. Her tongue peeled them off as slick as a teller at a bank, and as efficiently stashed them away—in her stomach. When I tried to salvage what was left as my rightful therapist fee, she let me know in no uncertain terms that she was in no mood for cutting me in. When she finished, I figured she was worth, cash in stomach, close to forty dollars.

My interest in our nightly walks picked up considerably after that.



First faltering steps—two weeks old

Jerome Hellmuth

Jerome Hellmuth





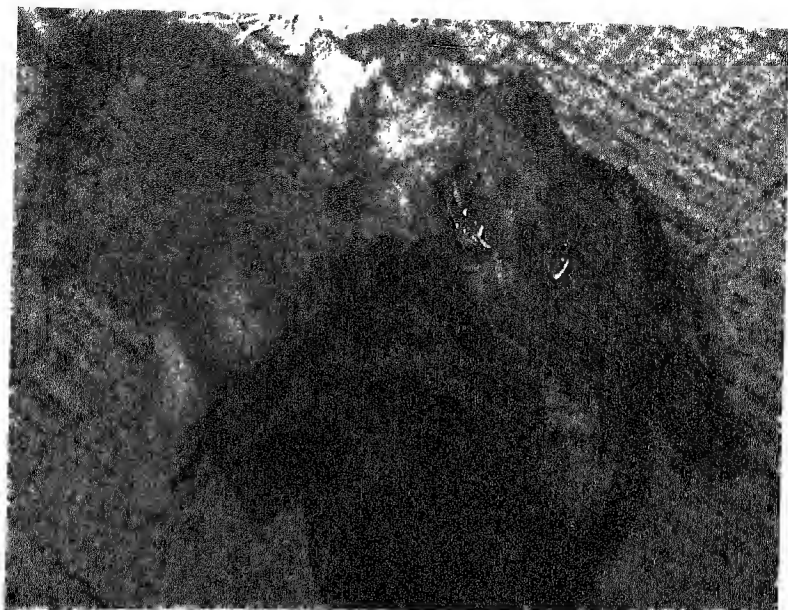
A nap in Jana's lap

Jerome Hellmuth

Playtime—Darien, Kunu, and Hexie

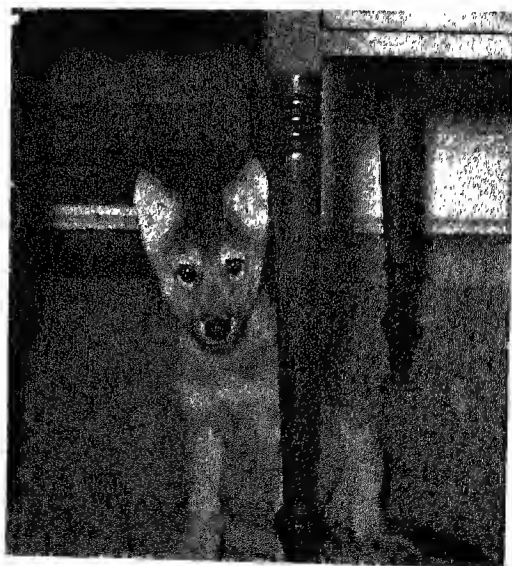
Jerome Hellmuth





Free-for-all—Kunu and Hexie

Jerome Hellmuth



To bed in the cardboard box—two months old

Jerome Hellmuth

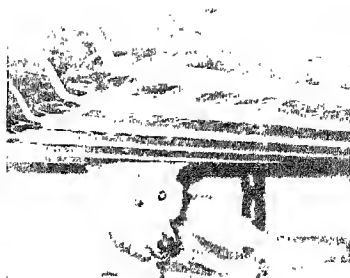


Jerome Hellmuth



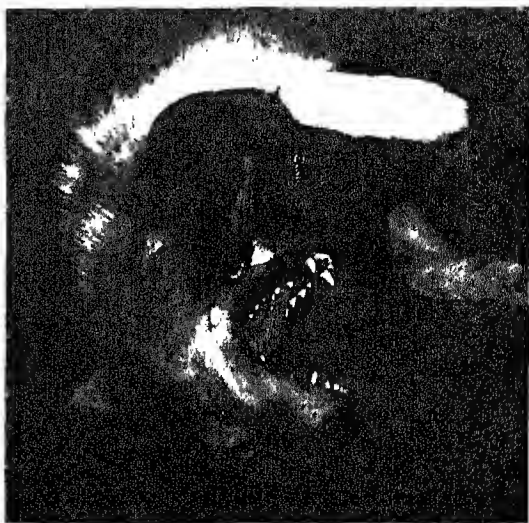
What's all this gardening about?





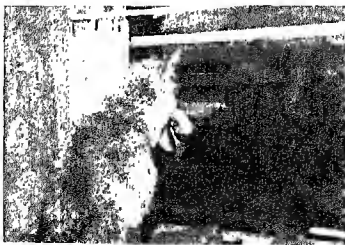
Kunu's den under our bed

Jerome Hellmuth



Free-for-all,
but now with big teeth

Jerome Hellmuth

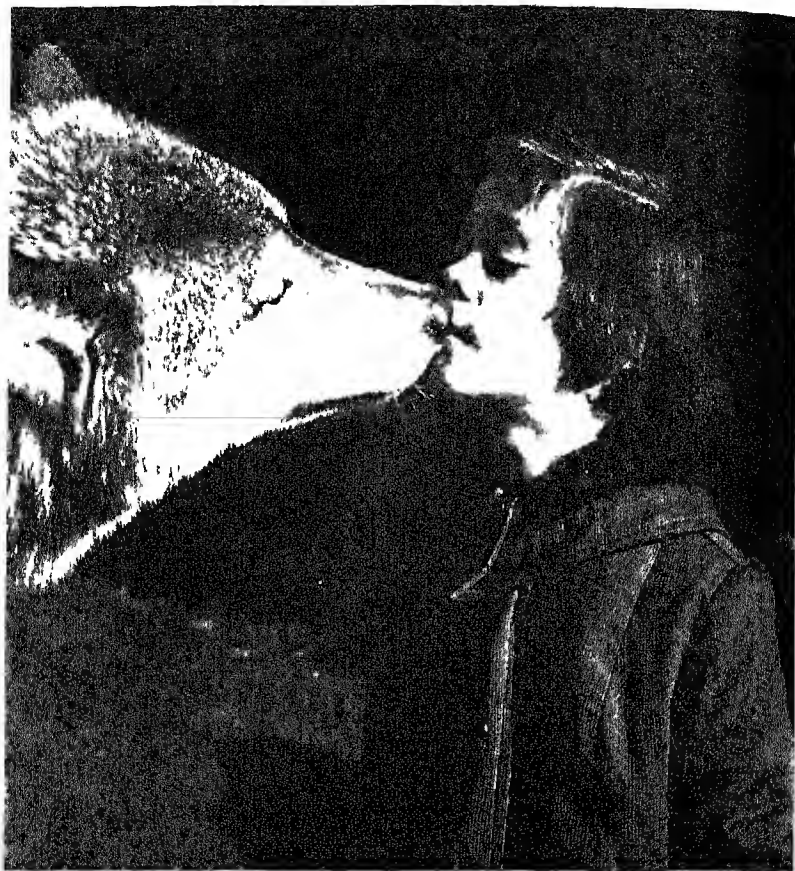


All ready and
anxious to go outdoors

Play therapy with Darien's
doll—Kunu full grown

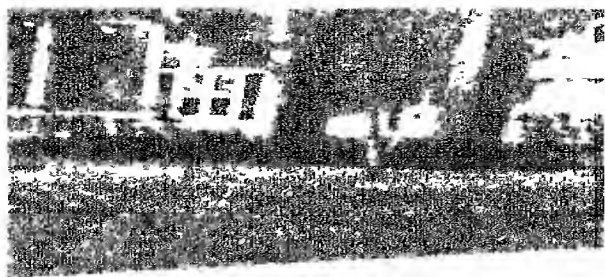
A gentle kiss for Darien

Jerome Hellmuth



Making another new friend







Caught in the act of
chewing up Darien's crayons

Steve Wilson



All attention
for Kunu brings
disdain from Sitka

Steve Wilson



A bed is to play on



Jerome Hellmuth

(Above) Elane, Kunu, and neighbors' children



Jerome Hellmuth

(Above right) Jana and Kunu resting between fun

(Below) Elane and Kunu enjoying the summer sun

Jerome Hellmuth





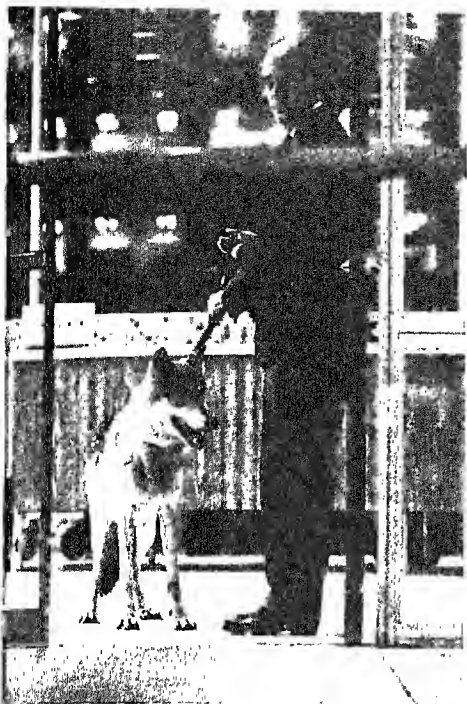
Ready for a ride in the station wagon

Greeting and love to Elane

Steve Wilson







Steve Wilson

(Opposite) What's cooking?

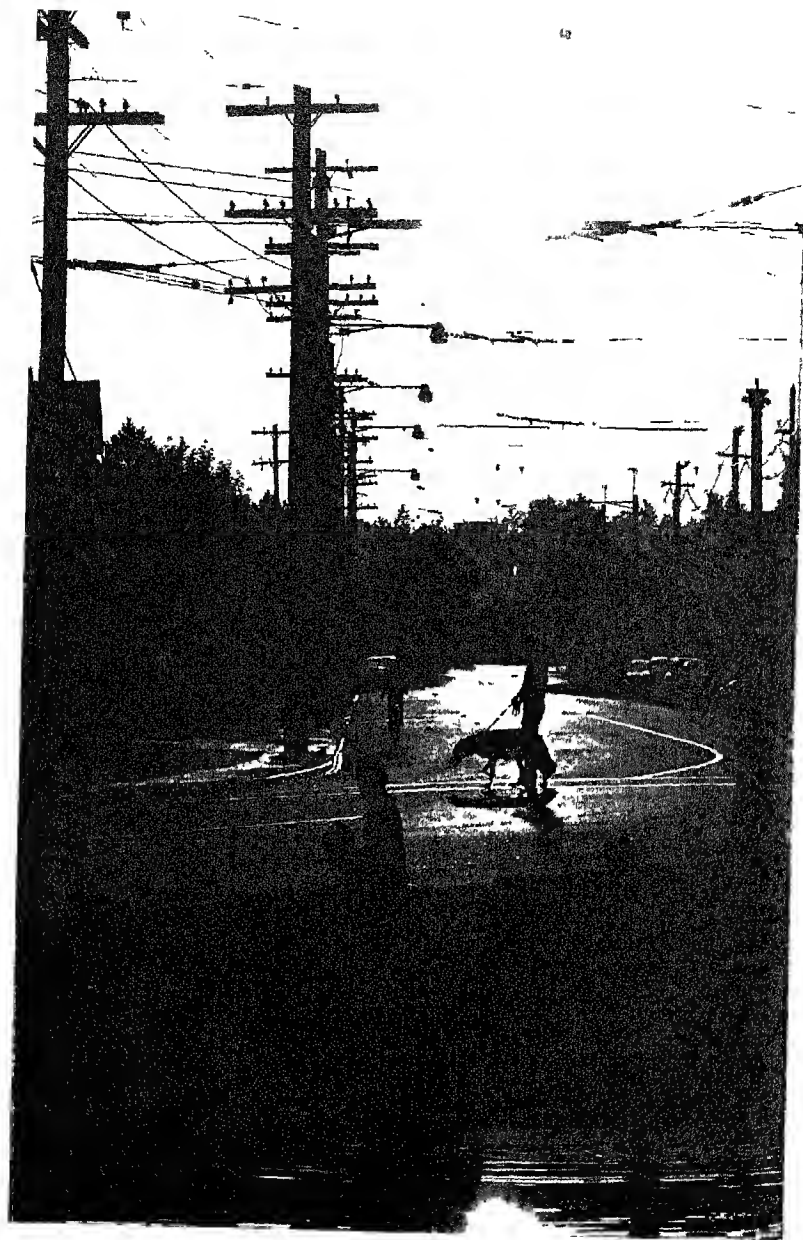
(Left) A visit downtown
to the public library

(Below) Bath time

(Overleaf) A walk around the
Denny Blaine pond at sunset

Steve Wilson





There were times when the secrets and mysteries of the night had more to say to me than to Kunu. This was never more true than with the clandestine love affairs that went on in parked cars around the neighborhood. After weeks of unavoidable observation of the morals of the community, my guess was that the number of these would give Capitol Hill a respectable national rating for its size and socioeconomic composition. But I was trying less to be a Kinsey investigator than a friend of the wolf who was trying to make her peace with the world.

What do you do, however, when your curious pet wolf leads you, all unknowing, up to a parked car whose occupants are amorously occupied? It happened so quickly one night that I held my breath out of sheer embarrassment, not knowing what to do. I had hoped that perhaps Kunu would be quiet enough so we could get by without disturbing the intent couple inside. But no such luck. Kunu proceeded to leap up and plunk her big paws against the side of the car and whine a loud and cheerful greeting.

"Jesus Christ, honey!" I heard a man say.

"What's wrong?" came a female whisper.

"I thought I saw a wolf!" the man answered.

I hurried Kunu on as fast as I could.

Kunu had a way of startling more than a few lovers in the community. She could arouse a whole neighborhood of people right out of their beds in the middle of the night if she heard a police or fire siren go off. At the first sound of the deadly banshee, Kunu froze in her tracks, as though suddenly gripped and transformed by some strange overpowering force. Then she sat back on her haunches like some wolf perched atop a mountain in the wilderness and

let go of some of the most hair-raising howls imaginable. Her wavering crescendoes were especially awful at this time in her life, for her voice was changing and notes dropped and soared sour and sharp on the sliding scale. Lights snapped on in houses up and down the block—starting, invariably it seemed, with Mrs. Wickstrom's—and windows were thrown open. By the time heads got to poking out to see what demon was loose in the streets, I had already dragged Kunu in the shrubbery to hide. There I throttled her with both hands to keep her from howling further. This only made the howls sound more gruesome, like someone being strangled to death in the bushes.

I tried to find a better way to handle the problem of the siren and Kunu's howling. I decided the best way was to drown out the scream of the siren so Kunu couldn't hear it. Then she wouldn't have to howl. At the first peep of one starting up, I went into my planned repertory of vocal tricks and gymnastics, from singing operatic arias (of which I knew no words and had only the roughest idea of tunes) to whistling, hooting, and even dancing a jig—anything to distract Kunu's sensitive soul from hearing those wailing witches of the night that tormented her into dismal cries of torture. But I carried it too far, for then I began to disturb the peace. People were poking their heads out to see an old man on the street, crazier than a hoot owl, waving his arms in the air and dancing with a mad dog—or was it a wolf?

By November Kunu had become steadier and was ready to join the ranks of the civilized under the bright light of day. It had been a fascinating transformation, yet one touched with sadness too, for out of all the turmoil of her vibrant, restless, and ever-searching soul, she found order

and peace at last—or should one say, she traded herself in for a lesser instrument to play simpler and more pedestrian tunes? It was hard—nay, impossible—for Kunu to remain an artist in a world where art was not wanted.

14

There's something safe about a wolf when it's a baby, but when it starts

to grow and the four-ounce nursing bottle is displaced by the three-pound dish of food, and it begins to weigh forty, sixty, seventy-five pounds, and it stretches five feet from nose to tail, as Kunu did by the time she was eight months old, you begin to have misgivings.

Elane asked me one day, "You don't think Kunu will get any bigger, do you? I never imagined a wolf could get this large."

I should have kept my mouth shut. "Why, this is nothing," I bragged. "Some Mackenzie Valley wolves have been known to go to eight feet and weigh one hundred and seventy-five pounds!"

When I saw her mouth drop, I hurriedly tried to reassure her, "Well, of course, Kunu will never get that

big. Females never do. They're always smaller than the male. But they're more beautiful. Just look at her." I pointed admiringly to Kunu, who was basking luxuriously on the sofa nearby. "Note that attractive face, that gorgeous body, those delicate limbs," I was trying to calm Elane's fears by appealing to her aesthetics.

"Are you describing the wolf or Brigitte Bardot?" she said with sarcasm. "As far as I can see she's just as big an ox as Sitka." Then she smiled. "But a beautiful one."

Kunu was, in truth, as beautiful as she was big and powerful. She had developed a thick gray coat of fur tipped with black hairs and had a long flowing tail that hung gracefully to the floor. Her eyes were a clear crystal yellow and her erect ears tinged with the softest fawn color. But it was her awesome set of teeth—a row of long sharp daggers—that took your breath away. She now moved through the house like a huge timber wolf through the forest, leaping over toys and tricycles and dodging in and out among the furniture with exquisite grace.

Along with her power and beauty came a strong assertion of self. You might call it her period of adolescence. All the books say it's a time for the adults to batten down the hatches and ride the storm out. It wasn't long before we realized we were approaching what looked like a real hurricane.

Not having a long heritage of bondage bred into her like the dog, Kunu's adolescent spirit of independence took on some ominous signs, particularly with regard to some of the amenities of domestic living. When it came to food, for instance, she took the direct approach of the ruthless conqueror, "I came, I saw, I ate everything up," which may be all right for life in the woods but can create problems in the house.

Kunu's appetite apparently was never satisfied, which we should have understood and expected of a rapidly growing wolf. We did our best to meet her daily needs without emptying our modest bank account, but this didn't seem to suffice, for everytime Elane opened the refrigerator door Kunu opened her big jaws and voraciously snapped up everything she could hook her teeth into—a roll of salami, a leftover slab of ham, a half of cantaloupe—and dashed with her prize under the kitchen table where she gulped it down with loud slobbering chaps.

When this first happened, Elane thought it was cute, as a doting mother might upon seeing her little boy steal his first cookies out of the cookie jar. But when Kunu grabbed up a pot roast Elane had saved for dinner, war was officially declared.

Sensibly Elane decided not to meet the issue head-on. Instead she resorted to the subtleties of psychological warfare, choosing camouflage as her first strategic plan. She stationed herself near the refrigerator and went into a rigid motionless trance, hoping that Kunu might not see her or would finally get tired and leave. But Kunu had no such intentions, not while Elane was her magic key to that big food box. Like a private eye, Kunu kept tabs on Elane's every move, for Elane soon *was* moving and wobbling around in her shoes out of sheer exhaustion.

It was time to try another principle: distract and confuse the enemy by false leads. Elane placed tasty bits of food for Kunu at the other end of the kitchen, as far away from the refrigerator as possible, and then quickly tiptoed back to get in and out of the door before Kunu knew what was up. But Kunu always knew what was up. The four-yard dash back to the refrigerator was two easy leaps

through the air for Kunu after she gobbled up all the bait on the floor. Elane lost every heat.

Desperate, Elane dumped psychological warfare and used her own shotgun method. She flung chunks of food recklessly all over the kitchen while she remained strategically positioned next to the refrigerator door, thus giving herself those few extra precious seconds to get out the butter and eggs, or whatever else happened to be handy that might make a meal. It didn't last. Kunu's cavernous mouth was an insatiable Moloch that consumed everything that came flying through space. It began to dawn on Elane, a little later than it should have perhaps, that for her to win this game would require that she empty the larder to the bare enamel walls. It was then that she called in the expert—me.

After sizing up the situation, I decided to fight fang with fang, so to speak. But since my dentition couldn't compare with Kunu's in size, sharpness, bite, or jaw power, I kept the kitchen broom handy, just in case.

I stationed myself in front of the refrigerator as though this were the last stand against a wolf pack in some corny novel of the far North. Eager to be on hand for the big showdown, the children shinnied up counters and around the kitchen sink for choice front seats. Sitka and Hexie, on the other hand, hurriedly removed themselves, reading well the dark storm clouds gathering on the horizon.

"All right," I said, ready for the siege. "There's no use fooling around anymore. She won't obey, so the chips are down. Elane," I commanded, "open the refrigerator door!"

Kunu was a few feet away, crouching formidably on the floor in front of me, trying to figure me out with her smoldering amber eyes. Slowly she got to her feet and

came at me. I shook a warning finger in her dark determined face and shouted, "Kunu, go lie down. Go back! Lie down, do you hear!"

Her hearing was never better, but she came at me anyway. I grabbed my secret weapon, the broom, and gave her a resounding swat on the behind. She stood there for a moment shocked and shaken, and then ducked under the table, growling and showing her teeth. But it was a big bluff. A real deep personal hurt had put out the fierce fires in her eyes. She sulked and looked miserable.

"She obeyed!" I triumphed, waving the broom in the air like a flag of victory.

"Obeyed!" snorted Elane in disgust. "Why, you scared the poor thing to death. I could have done as much with a broom myself without asking your expert help."

From the filled bleachers along the kitchen sink came the shouts and threats of an angry mob outraged at my cruelty. They came storming down into the arena with more savagery in their eyes than a pack of wolves in a Walt Disney cartoon, screaming at me and ready to tear me to pieces.

"You hurt poor Kunu! You're mean, you're cruel!" they shouted. Then they threw themselves at Kunu with open arms and apologies, and smothered her in warm hugs and kisses as though she had been rescued from the jaws of death. I walked off the battlefield defeated and demoralized.

But this wasn't to be my only ignominious defeat. Another skirmish, of even more serious consequences, came the evening Jana was setting the table for dinner. She had just finished putting the butter on when Kunu, unable to control herself any longer, leaped onto the table, and amid an avalanche of crashing and crunching dishes,

snatched up a whole block of butter in her jaws and proceeded to gulp it down right there in the middle of all the rubble of dinnerware.

"Daddy, help!" Jana screamed. "Kunu jumped on the table and is eating everything up!"

I was in the kitchen with Elane at the time and heard the wild commotion and rushed in. What I saw made me feel more savage than the most ferocious beast. I lunged with both hands at Kunu to pull her off the table. But she saw me coming and leaped from the table, kicking a trail of broken glass and crockery dust in my face. I landed spread-eagle on the table. Kunu was already half-way up the stairs, headed for the safety of Darien's room.

I quickly unscrambled myself and darted for the kitchen, shouting, "That does it! Where's that broom! Just give me that broom. I'll show that son of a bitch!"

Elane was at the door and stopped me in my tracks. "You'll do no such thing again!" she said. "Now listen to me. Kunu's still young. She's had so little time to learn."

"So little time to learn!" I boomed at her and jerked my arm out of her grasp. "Jesus, she's eight months old now. How long are we going to wait? Till she's a geriatric case?"

By now Thane and Karen had joined Jana in the dining room, attracted by all the racket. I looked at them. "Oh, my God, no!" I groaned. "Not this audience again—this—this—Anticruelty League to Protect the Poor Wolves of North America from Mean Fathers!"

"It's just as well they're here," said Elane. "It's high time we settled a few things about Kunu, right now before problems get worse. I've been thinking a lot about this ever since our trouble with Kunu at the refrigerator. First, I don't think Kunu understands why you get so

angry with her. She can't understand why you punish her for eating."

"It's not for eating," I broke in. "I want her to eat like anybody else. It's just that she doesn't eat right."

"Ohol" Elane's big brown eyes opened wide and she began to wag her head teasingly. "You want wolfie to have fawncy table manners, deah fawther."

"Oh, come on!" I glared at Elane. "Of course I don't expect her to have table manners. But neither do I expect her to have to jump in the middle of the table to grab food."

"Tell me," said Elane, growing serious again. "What do kids do—and for that matter, even adults—when they are hungry and they see some tempting food on the table? Well, Kunu is no different. But since she doesn't have hands to grab with, she has to jump on the table to get what she wants."

"Oh," I said with a cynical smile. "You think it's all right for Kunu to jump on the table anytime she gets hungry."

"Of course not," she snapped back. "But you don't teach her with a broom every time you think she's not doing something right. We'll probably have to keep her in another room while we eat, or give her her own meal with the other dogs at the time we eat. But don't forget Sitka was just as bad at Kunu's age, if not worse. It's not just because Kunu's a wolf. Have you forgotten the time Sitka gobbled up a whole chicken the night we were expecting company?" She jabbed an accusing finger at the table. "And in exactly the same spot—no different than Kunu!" Elane stopped talking for a moment. She searched out our eyes and then said gravely, "I'll tell you what's troubling all of you, as it has been me these days. We're afraid that a

wolf can't be raised in a family, that our experiment won't work. Come," she appealed, "isn't that it? Be honest now."

We all nodded our heads solemnly.

"Yes, I admit it," I said, shaking my head disconsolately. "I'm worried it won't work. I keep wondering whether it isn't too much to ask—of us, of Kunu. When she doesn't cooperate the way I want her to, I get angry, frustrated. Then I take all my bad feelings out on her. I know it's not right, but what do you do?"

"We all feel the same way," said Elane coming over to put an arm around me. "I sound big and courageous right now, but I'm full of mixed up feelings too. But we've got this far and we're going to finish. Think how much we've already accomplished and how well Kunu has done. What we're going to have to learn is to see the world the way Kunu sees it, not the way we see it."

I shook my head despondently and said, "I don't know if I can—"

15

When I came to think about it later, Elane was right. We had accom-

plished a lot with Kunu to be proud about. All was not as dark as it sometimes seemed.

For one thing we could be happy that she was a healthy animal. We had worked hard at this, giving her the best food and physical care we knew. We took her religiously to the vet for frequent checkups, more often than most dogs go, and we saw that she received all her shots for immunity against disease. The vet always gave her a good bill of health and had nothing but the highest praise for her, telling us that "Kunu is safer to handle than most dogs I see, and a lot pleasanter." This coming from the vet who not so long ago was so leery of her. What more could we ask?

Housebreaking her was more of a problem, but wasn't this true of dogs too? We could consider ourselves lucky, for while it took Kunu perhaps a little longer than most dogs, she did finally accomplish the feat. Here thanks should rightly go to Sitka. He was a most skillful teacher, and Kunu did not miss a trick he showed her on our walks together to the park. Much of Kunu's success in this endeavor was also due to a certain ritual, rather than to any form of punishment or threats by us.

The first thing she liked to do when she got up in the morning was to have a good hearty breakfast and then go off on her walk with Sitka to the park. On the way she found time to read all the latest newssheets penned on bush and tree and fire hydrant by all the gossiping dogs in the neighborhood, and then she was ready for her own depository located not more than twenty paces inside the park boundary, right in the middle of the main footpath. It wasn't the nicest place to be sure, with so many people coming and going, and she might well be criticized as an unconscientious litterbug, but it was much preferable to the kitchen floor.

If I were honest about Kunu, however, I couldn't overlook the numerous accidents she continued to have in the house. But some of these, if not most, it is only fair to recognize, had nothing at all to do with her failure to empty her bladder at the right time or the right place, which is the only way man looks at this function. Wasn't this exactly Elane's point when she said that we must look at the world through Kunu's eyes, not just our own? I could add—and through her nose too. Wolves use urine for communication, so that these so-called accidents in the house may not have been accidents at all, but very important messages, even though I couldn't understand a word of them

nor was there another wolf around to read and enjoy them. Hexie and Sitka sniffed at them like they were some foreign language.

An even tougher problem was Kunu's practice of regurgitating at different times. She had no control over it, for it was involuntary. It came as naturally to her as a belch. But it was purposeful. It's part of the nature of the wolf and the easiest thing it can do, on the ground in the woods or on the carpet in the living room. Wolf babies are fed this way when their parents return with full stomachs from the hunt. Now that Kunu was growing bigger and her stomach larger, it posed a problem. It wasn't that she was always doing it or in quantities that would feed a whole family of baby wolves, thank goodness, but enough to require that Elane's now famous pail and mop be kept always handy. Thane's remark pretty well summed it up, "Kunu likes to vomit, doesn't she?"

In spite of such problems, we could well be satisfied the way things were going with Kunu. Her friendliness, for instance, couldn't be surpassed by any dog. She loved everyone and everyone loved her. If she had any kind of problem here, it was that she loved too much and too deeply. She couldn't let anyone pass her on the street without loving him. A man, woman, child, or dog could be way down at the end of the street and she'd start in squirming and squealing with all kinds of lovey feelings. She couldn't wait to get her paws and teeth on them. Most dogs don't give you so much as a passing sniff.

All this was fine when she was small and nobody minded. But now that she was big and strong it was different. She almost toppled people over when she jumped up to greet them. Her very massiveness was awe-inspiring as she stood up as tall as they were, her big paws resting

on their shoulders and her smiling face full of long white fangs gleaming into their startled eyes. Then came her sweet kiss of teeth when she clutched an arm in her jaws and growled happy notes of joy and deep-felt emotion. Sometimes I had to pry her loose from her love-object.

Kunu's growling was something else that could mislead you if you didn't try to understand what it meant. The first time she growled, even though she was just a whelp, we got worried. We thought she was getting mean or vicious. But we learned she could growl and be happy too, as she was when she grasped you with her teeth in a "Hello, there!"

Elane and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out her growls. We began to compare them with the cussing or swearing of certain people. In anger a person may say, "God damn it, I'll knock your block off!" Or he may say in joy, "God damn it, but it's a beautiful day!" Likewise with Kunu. If she had a bone in her mouth and you came near, she'd growl threateningly, as much as to say, "Look here, you bastard, if you know what's good for you, you'll get the hell out of here. Now I'm warning you." If, on the other hand, she was full of affection, she'd growl, "God almighty, but I go for you. You're the greatest. Let me give you a big hug and kiss!"

It was just that Kunu had strong feelings about life. Possession happened to be one of her strongest. If she was eating, you didn't bother her. The food belonged to her and you better not try to take it away from her. Yet sometimes even here she could be reasoned with. I learned this well during a showdown I had with Kunu under the darkness of our bed, where she had dragged a shoe. I was furious and went in after her on my stomach. First of all it was a darn good shoe. Second of all it was *my* shoe,

which made all the difference in the world. Lastly, who the hell did she think she was anyway! All the typical reactions of man toward a dog, of master to slave.

When I faced the scorching fire of her eyes and the long knives of her shining fangs only a few feet from my face so that I could feel her hot breath, and when her growls grew more deafening every moment till the walls of the room shook and the bed springs sang, I felt like General Putnam, the Revolutionary hero who, the story goes, was so angry at a she-wolf that had killed seventy-five of his sheep on his Pomfret, Connecticut, farm that he stripped and went down into a wolf den with loaded musket after her. All I had were my bare hands. This disadvantage gave me some humility to reflect that perhaps I should try to understand Kunu's point of view about all this before I proceeded further. So I began to talk softly to her about the problem and at the same time patted her gently, starting safely from the end of the tail. I told her how much this all must mean to her for her to feel so strongly, and that I would appreciate it if she would let me have my shoe back, and that I would find something else she might like just as well.

It took a lot of time and talk, but it worked. We stayed friends because I didn't threaten her security nor did I try to destroy the sense of her own dignity and worth. World diplomats, teachers, psychologists, could receive no finer training than to raise a wolf—to be able to see the world, as Elane said, through the eyes of a wolf.

16

"What fun is it to have a wolf if nobody else knows about it? Anyway,

I don't want to tell any more lies about Kunu."

These words from Thane, out of the mouth of a child, and an experience I had in the park with a Russian who was a retired boxer, started us off on a complete revision of our domestic and foreign policy toward Kunu.

Kunu had come to look so much like Sitka by now, especially in size and color, that the problem of keeping her identity a secret had become less troublesome. There were many important differences between them, of course. Sitka's chest was broader, his eyes less slanted, his nose more blunt, not pointed like Kunu's, and Sitka's tail always curled up over his back when he trotted while Kunu's always hung down. But somehow these differ-

ences were not significant to most people. They accepted Kunu as a malamute.

Every now and then, however, someone got a flash of the truth. Usually this happened when a stranger ran into Kunu for the first time. It was as though the unconscious picked up a clue while at the same time the reality presented to the eyes disputed it. A car would come to a screeching halt, and a pale face would peer out and exclaim, "My God, for a moment I thought I saw a wolf!" Then the car would drive off with the person shaking his head in disbelief.

A memorable example of this reaction occurred the time we took Kunu to the Tacoma Zoo to visit her family. We had written to Joe, the keeper, who had readily given us permission, for he was eager to see Kunu now that she was grown. There seemed to be no familial recognition or greetings exchanged when we brought her up to where her family was caged. It was the strangest sight to see Kunu, a wolf, pressing forward in the crowd, no different from any of the others, straining to observe what was going on inside the cage.

There was one nice old lady who turned and scowled down at Kunu for stepping on her toes. Suddenly her anger vanished. I could tell from her face that she got that flash of insight. The struggle now began. "Here's a wolf standing right beside you," I could see her unconscious tell her. Then she looked at the wolves in the cage. Then back to Kunu outside the cage. Thus back and forth her eyes went. Finally I could see the logical mind come to her rescue and say, "This is sheer nonsense. It can't be. She's here and they're there." The comment from Joe, who observed all this, was, "It just shows you how important it is to be on the right side of the fence."

There was one person who wasn't to be so easily fooled. He was the Russian ex-pugilist whom Kunu and I met in Volunteer Park on Capitol Hill. He spent all his time here training and keeping in condition although he was an old man long retired from the ring. We usually met him in the morning on his way to his "training camp," which was located under an old madrona tree overlooking the city reservoir and just below the Seattle Art Museum. Maybe the setting with all its lovely flowerbeds made him feel elegant and took him back to the royal gardens of St. Petersburg. He himself, however, displayed no such manners or taste, for his appearance was more like a rough Tartar from Outer Mongolia. He was short, dark, stocky, and hairy like a lion, and he never wore a shirt, nor shoes either, for that matter. He brought to his camp a coil of rope and his lunch wrapped up in an old newspaper. His first workout was to hitch the rope to a lower branch, climb up and down it like a chimpanzee, using his toes as well as hands, and then go to the top of the tree to hide his lunch from the kids who came to watch and tease him. When he got down again, he used the rope around his waist to hold up his baggy pants, for his greatest activity was running around the park. With the thick coil about his belly he now looked like a Volga boatman who had escaped from bondage and wasn't going to stop till he crossed the border and reached the safety of another country.

One could almost believe this to see him run for hours, it seemed, around and around the park at a steady-paced trot. The kids followed thick on his heels, taunting him and calling him names. He must have been close to seventy, but he could outrun them all. You kind of wanted to cheer him on as he came puffing like an old locomotive

across the long sweeping lawns of the park with all the little nasty kids trailing after him. He would glance over his thick shoulders from time to time and smile to see the kids, one by one, fold up by the wayside, holding their aching sides and gasping for air.

When we came by, he would always slow down to stare at us. I soon realized he was interested in Kunu, not Sitka or me. Then one day he stopped and stood quietly in front of Kunu. There was a sharp twinkle in his dark eyes.

"Ah, what a wonderful animal," he sighed with admiration. "I know them well back in Siberia. They came by the hundreds across the plains when my father rode with the men on the hunt."

"You know sled dogs?" I asked trying to feel him out. "These are Alaskan malamutes, the only native sled dog of North America."

"No, no, not him," he dismissed Sitka with a flip of his hand. "I had many malamutes when I drove sleds in Alaska. She's the one," he nodded his strong bald head toward Kunu and studied her with a close eye. "This wolf, here. This pretty one. You fool other people, but not me. Once you see wolf you never forget." Openly surprised he said, "Why you don't tell people you've got a wolf? Why are you afraid? I would be proud of such an animal if she's mine. She's your friend and you lie about her?"

He came over and greeted Kunu with enveloping arms that were so powerful that she didn't have a chance to grasp them with her jaws. He took her head in his strong hands and began to feel around the base of the skull. Kunu loved it. It was her itchiest spot. Never before had she found someone who knew just where to scratch her.

"See?" he said and took my hand and pressed it against

a thick knob of bone at the end of the skull. "Feel it?" I nodded, a little confused by what he meant. "This is the seat of intelligence," he said. "A wolf always got a bigger bump than dog. That's why he's smarter. I know. I feel many wolf bumps in Russia."

After that auspicious meeting, which set me thinking, Kunu and the Russian became great pals. Kunu soon joined the training program, running at the heels of the old man with the kids, like a happy member of the pack. Since I was at the end of the leash, I too got dragged into this marathon of physical fitness. Kunu had good reason to run. When she reached the camp under the madrona tree, there would be more scratching around the knob of itchiness and juicy tidbits from the old man's garlic sandwich.

I too had made a friend and learned a lesson. How true were the words he said about Kunu—almost the same thought Thane had expressed. To keep Kunu's identity hidden any longer was to defeat our purpose of showing people what a fine pet a wolf can be. How else could we hope to educate people but by telling them the truth?

I discussed the idea with Elane.

"But what if Mr. Rausch finds out?" asked Elane. "You can bet your life Mrs. Wickstrom will write and tell him."

"I'm afraid that's a chance we're going to have to take. We can't go on any longer pretending Kunu isn't a wolf. We're missing the whole point of what we're trying to do."

"The kids, I know, will feel better about it," said Elane. "They haven't been happy about all this secrecy and deceit. I agree. It's time to tell the truth. We'll all feel differently about Kunu when we can be proud about her, not ashamed."

The irony was that when we began to tell people that Kunu was a wolf, nobody believed it. We were hurt and disappointed. Here all along we were afraid to say that Kunu was a wolf; now nobody cared, not even those who knew her best. They thought we were being facetious. Hadn't they known Kunu since she was a little pup? She wasn't anything like the wolves they had read about in story and fable.

Karen said, "It just goes to show that people don't care what you are if you're not too different."

"But Kunu is different," said Jana angrily.

"But not that different," said Karen. "Except for grabbing people and wetting, and a few things like that, she's like most dogs. People think these are just some of her own personal quirks. Who knows what a wolf really looks like? Remember in New York City when we took our pet raccoon, Piblow, to Washington Square Park? Everyone would gather around and you'd hear all kinds of opinions about what kind of an animal she was, from, 'Look at the cute little skunk,' to 'What a darling panda,' or 'I wonder where they got that sweet-looking porcupine?' Why should we be surprised then if people can't tell Kunu is a wolf or don't want to believe it?"

"Oh, dear," said Jana, discouraged. "Are we going to have to educate everyone we meet on the street? It'll be as funny having to tell them Kunu is a wolf as it was not telling them."

Thane grumbled, "If they're that dumb, I'm not telling them anything."

"Nor am I going to brag about it," said Karen.

"You don't have to," I said. "But if anybody asks, you can help them get a better idea about the wolf. That's

important." I paused and then added, "And this doesn't mean we're going to be less careful with Kunu."

"What about all the children who are Kunu's friends?" asked Jana. "What are you going to tell them?"

"I've been telling them that Kunu's a wolf. They think it's a joke. But I'm not letting them play with Kunu as before. She's too big. She could scratch them or knock them over. If Kunu were a French poodle, nobody would mind. But with a wolf it's different."

"It's like at my school," said Jana. "If a colored kid socks a white kid, it's worse than if the colored kid hits another colored kid."

As time went on, we began to get all kinds of interesting questions and responses from people about wolves. We wondered where they got all their strange notions about this animal. The folklore, we began to realize, must flow wide and deep.

"Is it true," one little boy asked, "that wolves drink water just like horses, like my father says?"

"No," I said, interested in his question, for a few days earlier a woman had told me that her husband, who was a hunter, could tell a wolf in the woods by the way it drank water at a stream. He claimed it drank the way a horse does. Where this idea came from I could never tell. There was also another twist to this notion, which even some reputable books on animal lore have given credence to: that wolves lap up water with more noise than dogs. This certainly wasn't true with Kunu and Sitka. Sitka always made a louder sound when drinking, probably for no other reason than because he had a wide mouth and big heavy lips.

Many people we met assumed that a wolf howls a lot.

He may in the woods, but not in the city. Sitka, for instance, howled much more than Kunu, and most of the dogs around the neighborhood did more barking throughout the day and night than Kunu did howling. Neither did a full moon make Kunu howl more. Most of her howling was due to sirens from police cars and fire trucks.

As far as we could discover, Kunu had a few different kinds of sounds or howls. One was a high, soft, affectionate whine when she greeted you or wanted you to pet or love her. She used this with people and animals. In contrast to this, she gave out a blast of air, much like a bulldog, when she felt irritated or bothered. It was a kind of expression of petulance, like "Please don't bother me," or "Now, get away!" She could get this way with Hexie when he bedeviled her too much. Her most characteristic sound, however, was the better-known wolf howl, a loud throaty howl full of loneliness and despair. It was interesting to see how Hexie picked this up—only his howl was the most God-awful screechy raspy gargle that ever came from a dachshund.

There are other sounds a wolf makes in the wilds that Kunu never had an opportunity to use, if she knew them at all since she didn't live the life of a wild wolf. One is the call of the chase, a guttural howl that calls wolves to assemble in the pack. Another is the sound of the actual chase, like the barking of hounds hot on a fresh scent.

The belief that a wolf is a one-man animal was frequently heard. The only way I could account for it was that the few wolves that have been raised by man were kept by solitary trappers and hunters somewhere far back in the wilderness where there were no other people for the wolf to befriend. Sometimes the reserved or antisocial character of these men precluded their pet wolves from be-

coming social animals even where there were people about. Thus the wolf had no choice but to relate to one person. If the fault lies with anyone, it's with man, not the wolf. We see the same happening with dogs that are given limited social contacts. From all we know from studies done of wolves in their natural habitat, they are the most social of animals. There should be no reason for them to act any differently with man. Kunu was certainly a living proof of this, and I usually volunteered a demonstration.

"I suppose," someone would say, "that your wolf is strictly a one-man animal."

"On the contrary," I would say. "The trouble is that she likes everybody. If I'd let her, she'd jump all over you right now with hearty salutations." My word was readily accepted without further proof.

17

We didn't know it then, but while we were proudly proclaiming to the world that Kunu was a wolf, Mrs. Wickstrom, our next-door neighbor, was writing the same thing to our landlord, Mr. Rausch, back in Illinois. We received a letter from him one day, telling us that he was coming to Seattle to pick up some things he had stored in the basement. The letter arrived on a Tuesday and he arrived the next day.

It would have been much wiser for him to have disturbed us when he arrived early that morning while we were still in bed. Instead of coming to the front door to ring the bell, he came in through the rear basement door with his own key. If he were planning to snoop to get to the truth of the rumor that we had a wolf in his house, he

couldn't have picked a better way, for Kunu was on the other side of the door, eagerly awaiting this surprise visit of a new friend. Unaccustomed though she was to such early morning cordiality, she thoroughly approved of it.

We had been keeping Kunu in the basement with Sitka and Hexie to be sure she wouldn't get out of the house in case Darien happened to open any of the doors upstairs. We didn't want our big wolf bouncing around the city streets. The basement, with its cement floors, was particularly comfortable for the two heavy-furred animals. And there was always a good pile of dirty laundry for Hexie to snuggle in to keep warm.

We had no idea anyone was in the house till we heard wild cries for help coming from the basement. The screams raised us right out of our covers. Someone was down in the basement being done over by Kunu, for mingling with the cries of distress came the affectionate whining of Kunu.

By the time we all got down there, we found our landlord perched atop the deep-freeze box and hanging on to the water pipes on the ceiling. Kunu was up with her front paws on the freezer and squealing with delight, inviting him down to prolong their brief encounter when he first stepped into the dark room and into the waiting jaws of her friendship.

"Get that damn wolf out of here! I'll sue you for this!" Mr. Rausch threatened from his cramped perch.

I couldn't remove my eyes from the strange scene. I had seen many landlords, but never in such a weird contorted position as Mr. Rausch at this moment. For a short pudgy man he had accomplished an amazing feat getting up there so fast. An aerial artist from Barnum couldn't have done better.

"I'm sorry," I stammered, embarrassed. "I didn't know you were arriving today."

I grabbed Kunu by the collar and hauled her off to the boiler room with Hexie and Sitka where I locked them in.

When I got back, Mr. Rausch was off his perch and brushing his clothes off in anger. He was alone, for the family had quickly disappeared upstairs, leaving me to handle the problem.

"Mr. Rausch, I'm terribly sorry," I offered. "You really didn't have to be afraid. She's just so terribly friendly."

He was brushing off his clothes even harder now. He was so angry, I knew, that he couldn't look at me or even say a word. Finally he started in, his voice shaking. "That wolf, Mr. Hellmuth, is a dangerous animal. He tried to attack me."

"Now wait a moment," I said, affronted by this accusation. "Kunu's never hurt anybody, and she's not mean."

"And what do you call this?" he said with biting sarcasm, rolling up his pants' leg and showing me a long streak of bruised skin running down his shin.

"Again I want to apologize," I said contritely. "I'm sorry that happened. But she tried to greet you and you got scared and pulled away."

"Mr. Hellmuth," he said, straightening up and grimly stalking toward the door, "I'm not here to argue. You've got a wolf in my house and I want her out. Right now. You either get rid of that wolf or you get out of this house in three weeks. That's final. That's all I have to say."

He went out slamming the basement door.

"Well, that's it," I said to Elane after I told her what happened. "Now what do we do?"

"We knew we were taking this chance," said Elane gloomily. "Maybe it's best. Now we can get our own house and have all our own things sent from Vermont." The thought cheered her up. "Then we can have any animals we want, and not have to worry about any landlord."

"I was afraid for a moment that you might say we had better get rid of Kunu," I said, a little ashamed of myself.

"Get rid of Kunu!" she said with surprise. "Why, we couldn't ever do that. She's part of the family."

Now I began to feel better. "It's house-hunting that we go then," I said grabbing her in my arms and swinging her around.

"Let's go right now," said Elane all excited. "We'll put all the kids and animals in the car and start hunting today. We'll eat at a drive-in and maybe even go to a drive-in movie tonight. Let's celebrate!"

We did just that. But in the days that followed, much of our joy was darkened by our unfinished business with Mr. Rausch, who instituted a suit for damages to his real and personal property. Total cost—\$3,000! Attached to the subpoena was a detailing of countless particulars, everything from damages to the old broken down garage and its foundations to the smell of wolf in the house that depreciated the property.

"What are we going to do?" I said to Elane. "If he takes it to court, as he's planning to, we won't have a chance—not when it comes out that we've been raising a wolf in the landlord's house. Boy, what a field day his lawyer will have with this wolf bit—starting as far back as Red Riding

Hood. With all the prejudices people have, including the judge no doubt, that lawyer's got it made."

"But we can say we haven't done all that damage," said Elane, getting her dander up. "Sure, the carpets, yes. But they're not worth three thousand dollars."

"Our word won't count," I said. "We have to have witnesses. Who knows what the condition of the house was when we moved in? We didn't know anybody here in Seattle when we first arrived to be a witness."

Elane suddenly screamed with joy. "I know! Aunt Lil!"

We couldn't have been luckier in our choice of champion. When Aunt Lil heard what was happening, she went into action, banners flying. She got one of the top lawyers in town to spearhead the attack. He, with the blistering fires from Aunt Lil's nostrils spurring him on, soon had the enemy camp in ragged retreat. Without ever getting into the legal chambers of the courthouse, we arrived finally at a settlement of \$600 for the carpets, which was more than they were worth, for we were able to discover that Mr. Rausch had purchased them from the salvage of St. Vincent De Paul for fifty dollars.

Now we had to find another place to live in—with a wolf.

18

When word got around that we were in the market for a house, we were

swamped by real estate agents from all over the city. What none of them could understand was why a fenced-in backyard and a cozy basement was more important to us than whether a house had two or three tile baths, a beautiful large kitchen with a built-in electric range, an automatic dishwasher, and all the other slick gadgets that most people look for. To say that we needed adequate facilities for raising a wolf would only have confounded them.

One house in particular interested us. It had the exact kind of backyard and basement we had in mind. The tall cedar fence would keep the animals from running out of the yard, and the basement had a cooler that would make

a perfect den for Kunu. Who knows, she might even have puppies here one day.

The house was attractive and located in an interesting neighborhood. It was a country-style structure atop a small wooded hill overlooking the community pond across the street, with a lovely view of the blue waters of Lake Washington. For more soulful contemplation there was the rugged snowcapped Cascade Range far off in the hazy distance. This was the Denny Blaine area of Seattle, a woodsy residential section that was rapidly changing with a large influx of Negroes and Japanese coming into what had always been a predominantly white upper-middle-class community of old established Seattle families.

The house was located on the expanding fringe of this intermingling of different races and colors. It was in fact on the street that marked the dividing line between the transitional community and the big homes and estates of the wealthy whites dotting the slopes of the hill that ran down to the gentle shores of Lake Washington.

We thought perhaps there might be a greater tolerance toward Kunu among this mixture of people.

The local real estate agent who drove us around in her car told us what a nice class of Negroes had moved into the community, while at the same time decrying the fact that many of the fine old homes were now occupied by blacks.

"She sounded awfully snotty," said Jana. "I didn't like her at all. I wonder what she'd say if she knew that one of those nice old homes might soon be occupied by a wolf?"

"Maybe nobody will like Kunu," said Thane.

"Thane could be right," said Karen. "More people have wolf prejudice than race prejudice."

"Now, let's not start out with that kind of feeling," said

Elane. "Give people the credit that they can overcome their prejudices. Look at all the friends Kunu made on Capitol Hill."

"That's different," said Jana. "They knew Kunu from the time she was born. She grew up with them. Some didn't even believe she was a wolf. Those that did, didn't care."

"Let's wait till we buy the house," I said, "then we can worry."

We didn't have to wait long. In no time we made up our minds and bought. Although the house was smaller than our last house, it fit our needs and our pocketbook, and it had the kind of warm snug feeling that we all liked and had missed so much on Capitol Hill. As you came in the front door, there was a large living room with a big fireplace to your left. On the right was a dining room paneled in wide boards painted a soft white. The rear of the house had a kitchen smaller than we liked, but the pantry was more than adequate. Upstairs were four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

We sold our Vermont house and had all our furniture sent to Seattle by express van so that we could move in right away. By early February, 1960, we were in our new house.

Hexie and Sitka found themselves right at home. But Kunu was much more cautious. She hesitated at the threshold for a long time before she entered, her wary nose hard at work in the air filled with all kinds of strange and mysterious smells. Then she proceeded to examine the house from top to bottom. It was only by the end of the day that she felt comfortable about her new home.

After we got the house settled and everything moved in, I said to the family, "Well, here goes. It's time to take

Kunu and Sitka out for their walk. Sooner or later the neighbors are going to have to meet our animals and know that we have a wolf. It might just as well be now."

Denny Blaine had fewer children than Capitol Hill, but it made up for it with all its dogs. They covered the place. If there was a leash law, you'd never know it.

Some of the dogs must have gotten wind that a few more were moving into the community, because by the time I got Kunu and Sitka hitched up on their leashes and started down the steps to the street, a group of them had gathered to greet us. They seemed friendly enough except for a large Samoyed. He acted like a real tough, swaggering around in front of them with great disdain and snapping at any who got in his way. We didn't know it then, but he was known as the neighborhood bully who enjoyed nothing more than to terrorize small dogs.

When he saw how big our animals were, he wisely salied off to one side, growling invectives to himself. Then he spotted Hexie, who had followed us out the door to help salute the congregation of new friends. With one swift leap the Samoyed pounced from the rear and in a moment had Hexie lying helplessly on his back, with an evil threatening set of yellow fangs at his throat.

This was all that Sitka needed. Sitka hated nothing more than this kind of bullying of small dogs. It was as much a principle with him as was his readiness always to take on any dog. But Hexie was more than a small dog. He was Sitka's friend.

Sitka plunged forward, yanking the leash out of my hand, and with a thundering growl grabbed the Samoyed by the neck and tossed him with such force that he hit the street with a solid thud. The Samoyed quickly scram-

bled to his feet, whipped around the corner of the block, and disappeared without looking back to see what hit him.

The skirmish was over. Sitka had saved Hexie's self-esteem, but he had ruined Kunu's chance of properly presenting herself to the reception committee. Sitka's burst of fury had scattered the dogs to all corners with yipes of terror. Kunu just stood there all upset now, for dog fights bothered her.

The commotion had also alarmed the neighborhood. Children and parents came running out of houses to see what had happened. A couple of boys who saw the battle came over to tell me how happy they were to see the bullying Samoyed get the licking he deserved. But their admiring glances at Sitka were soon diverted to Kunu when she whimpered aloud for their attention. It was in answer to their questions about her that the news came out that a wolf had moved into the neighborhood. Before I could say another word, the boys were off on their heels telling everyone up and down the block.

This startling news, along with the dog fight, was no harbinger of goodwill for a family that had just moved into the community. When I took Kunu and Sitka out, people avoided us on the street. I could see anxious and concerned faces peering out at us from windows. Children on their way to school stopped and pointed fingers at us. They believed both animals were wolves. "Hey, Mister," they cried from afar, "what's the name of your wolves?"

We soon learned that the howls of our pets struck panic in the hearts of some of the people in the community. Baby-sitters were too scared to sit alone at night at other people's homes. One grandmother who came from another part of the city to sit for the weekend with her

grandchildren while the parents were away became so frightened that she called the police. She thought some wolves had escaped from the zoo and were outside her door. The parents had forgotten to tell her a new family had moved into the neighborhood with a pet wolf.

We began to get anonymous phone calls, warning us that if we didn't get rid of the wolves we would be reported to the city authorities. It wasn't long before the Humane Society, which handles all such problems of animals making a nuisance of themselves or disturbing the peace, sent us notices of complaints from neighbors whose names they couldn't divulge. When I phoned to inquire about the complaints, the man who answered the phone was very helpful in explaining the legal points. As grave as he was about the matter, he couldn't help chuckling about some persons getting so upset that they think they're hearing wolves. "There're all kinds of people in the world, I guess," he kindly apologized for them, hoping that I wasn't too offended by neighbors referring to my dogs as wolves.

Actually Kunu howled very little compared to the amount of barking all the dogs did in the community. But people were obviously more disturbed by a howl than a bark, especially when they knew it came from a wolf that lived only a few doors away from them.

The time Kunu sounded off the most was around early evening. It was her vesper song, like that of the birds. I always considered it a fitting end to the day and sat back to enjoy it as one would a symphony or some chamber music in the privacy of one's room. But now, because of the many complaints, I had to see that Kunu was put into the house early, before she had a chance to soliloquize to the world.

Yet I couldn't keep her in the house all day either. She needed to be outdoors in the fresh air. Inevitably, of course, sirens went off from time to time and she raised her voice in mournful response. The Wednesday noon practice alert siren always got her going. Worst of all was Sunday, with the parishioners singing and the organ playing at the nearby community church. Kunu's heart could melt with the best sinners and she would cry out to the heavens, begging forgiveness. The only trouble was that she didn't stop her howling when the organ and singing stopped. Unlike man, she couldn't turn off her feelings of deep devotion that neatly. Once her heart was stirred it couldn't be contained any more than a mighty river reaching full crest. While the congregation tried to bow heads in silent prayer, her voice went on filling the high vaults inside the church with the most soulful hosannas or doleful dirges, depending upon the nature of the services at the moment. Funerals hit her the hardest. No animal likes to pour out sorrow more than a wolf. She sobbed lugubriously, as though the day of doom was upon us all, man and wolf.

We were lucky that the families that lived on either side of us were understanding. One of the fathers, a lover of the outdoors, told me how much Kunu's vocalization meant to him, who hated the city. He said that all he had to do whenever he heard her was to close his eyes and he was immediately transported into the sweet depths of the green forest, far from the filth and noise of the city. He claimed that her voice was a therapy that replenished his soul every day and made living for him in the city possible.

The feelings and imaginations of many of the others in the community, however, went the other way. Some began

to see wolves prowling all over the neighborhood. Any pooch roaming in the dark became a wolf. I probably didn't help matters by allowing Sitka to run loose at night. A big sled dog like him needed more exercise than I could give him with the few walks we took every day. I realized too late what I had done when phone calls began to come in about the big wolf that was running around in the streets. I quickly decided to keep Sitka home at night.

What turned the community against Kunu and almost sealed her doom as a pet in our house was the story going around that our wolf had attacked a man who had come to our house to do some repairs.

What actually happened was that we had a plumber come to fix a leaky pipe in our basement. Elane happened to be busy upstairs at the time and Kunu was in the basement taking a snooze in her favorite dark cooler. The plumber started down the stairs with his flashlight when Elane heard him screaming for help. He yelled loud enough to be heard out on the street. Suddenly realizing her indiscretion of not having forewarned him, she ran to his rescue.

The plumber was a big man, but, poor fellow, down on his knees among his scattered bag of tools, he looked like a terror-stricken waif while Kunu crunched his arm with the greatest affection and wagged her tail gleefully, delighted beyond squeals over this chance acquaintance.

Elane helped the poor fellow upstairs and sat him in a kitchen chair to rest for a moment.

"My God, oh, God, a wolf!" he moaned and held his hand over his heart. "I thought she was a ghost coming at me."

He waited for a few moments till he caught his breath and was able to go on. "Every winter I hunt wolves with

my brother in Canada—he and a bunch of other guys,” he explained, looking up at Elane with the doleful eyes of a man who just had a scrape with death. “We shoot them from the air in airplanes. We kill hundreds. Then I run into one, my God, face to face in the basement, coming at me. I thought I was nuts or seeing things.” He thumped his chest with a fat fist and groaned. “For a while there I thought I was going to have a heart attack.”

It wasn't long after that when we heard that a petition was being circulated to get rid of Kunu.

19 Kunu wouldn't have had a chance if Denny Blaine hadn't been so edgy at the

time about a more troubling problem than having a wolf in the neighborhood. A rash of burglaries had suddenly broken out among some of the wealthy homes. To combat the problem a Community Protective Association was started and private police were hired to patrol the streets at night. As a home-owner, I was invited to join and help share the cost of supporting this mercenary police force.

"I'm against it," I told Elane when I explained the plan. "We pay taxes for police protection, and I'm not paying for it twice. Anyway, I don't believe this is the way for a large city to answer such a problem."

"Since we're new in the community," said Elane, "it might help if you did join, especially seeing how people

feel about Kunu." She sighed gloomily. "Oh, dear, and I thought Denny Blaine was such a nice, quiet, safe place."

"Other communities probably have the same problem," I said. "This kind of thing comes and goes like the flu. You don't solve it though by each neighborhood setting up its own police force. It reminds me of the cockroach problem in New York City. Instead of getting exterminators to rid a tenement of the pests, each tenant buys his own can of DDT and drives the bugs into his neighbor's apartment."

"If it's so bad," said Elane, beginning to get worried, "maybe you shouldn't walk the dogs so late at night. If you ran into a prowler, you can be sure Kunu and Sitka wouldn't be any help. They're too friendly. Why, Hexie, small as he is, is better than both of them put together. He at least barks when a stranger comes to the door. If a burglar broke in here, Kunu would give him a big hug of welcome. I don't think she'd even do anything if somebody attacked you."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," I said. "Many a kind and friendly dog has turned vicious in defense of his master. Besides, it can't be any worse than when we lived in New York along the waterfront. I ran into all kinds of tough-looking characters when I took Sitka out at night. I'd get embarrassed the way some of those husky longshoremen hopped to the other side of the street when they saw Sitka coming. It was Sitka's size that did it. Now that I also have Kunu along, I'm invulnerable. Maybe if the neighborhood burglars saw Kunu and Sitka they'd think twice—maybe even clear out and try somewhere else."

If any place was gloomy, it was Denny Blaine at night with its big overhanging trees, dense shrubbery, winding streets, and little hidden footpaths. Add to this the steady downpour of drenching rain, weighing down the trees and

your spirits, and you had the loneliest spot in the city. Now with burglars prowling the streets in the dark, the silence and mood of the place became even more ominous.

Doing a lot of walking myself with the animals every night, I could feel sorry for the policemen spending their lonely hours in this miserable weather. When they couldn't take it any longer, they found refuge and dry shelter in the open garages tucked into the hillside homes of Denny Blaine. From this vantage point they could still keep a watchful eye out for any suspicious person moving about on the streets or in the gardens.

It wasn't long before the policemen on their nightly beats came to know Kunu and Sitka well. But none of them could be convinced that Kunu was a wolf—at least, not so as to openly admit it. She was just too friendly to be the real thing. I'm sure, however, that the fantasy that she might be a wolf was a source of great inner courage to them as they walked their lonely paths in the dark. I could tell by the way they greeted us.

"Hello, therel I see you have your wolf with you," they called out loud enough to be heard for blocks around and in all the possible dark hiding places. "Boy, oh, boy," they continued with no let up in volume but modifying Kunu's sex for better effect, "I wouldn't want to meet *him* in the dark."

One of the policemen, Jack, became a good friend of ours. He loved to talk. He wasn't a policeman for lonely spots. He was the kind of cop who needed a beat right in the center of town, where everything was going on and where there was always someone around to gab with, if only the drunks. His late shift coincided with the time I took the animals out for their last walk of the day, which

could be anywhere from nine or ten at night to after midnight.

"Hi, there," his voice greeted us from out of the dim recess of his favorite garage a few blocks down from our house. "How are my old pals the wolves?" he teased me. Since I never got a good look at his face, I knew him only through his voice, which was always warm and friendly.

Kunu didn't have to wait for his greeting to respond. Long before we got near the garage, she began to whimper like a pup, anticipating the gentle words of love that Jack always had for her. If he wasn't around when we arrived, she sniffed about on the cement floor to find out if he had already been there. A warm scent put her into ecstasies. If her response was lukewarm, I knew he was still out there somewhere in the dark and that if we waited he'd soon be along.

It was a night in early April—one year almost to the exact date since Kunu's birth—that the animals and I started out for our last walk of the day. It must have been close to midnight by the time we left the house and headed down the street. It was darker than usual because of a heavy drizzle of rain and the thick clouds of mist rolling in through the trees. The street lights hung like tiny frosted Christmas bulbs in the gray fog. We had gotten down the street about two blocks when I noticed that Kunu was aware of someone coming toward us in the dark. She stopped in her usual way to catch the signals of sound and smell. I thought for a moment it was our friend Jack, for Kunu began to whine softly and wag her tail.

Suddenly the dark form of a man broke through the veils of mist where we stood under the faint glow of a street lamp. The man had on a raincoat and an old hat

pulled close down on his head. Kunu and Sitka were now straining hard on their leashes to greet him. For a few seconds I could see the man's startled face staring at both animals. The word "burglar" almost escaped my lips. Then I saw that familiar flash of insight on the man's face as he gaped at Kunu—a wolf! No, two wolves, for his fear had also caught fire to Sitka. The man spun around and shot off into the night.

Both animals now began to yelp and howl and lunge forward at the end of their leashes to follow. This is just what they had been waiting for, a good run as a relief from our usual leisurely saunter.

I pulled back on my heels to stop them. But not for long. Together they lurched forward with a thrust of more than 160 pounds. I had very little choice but to follow, skidding along on my heels over the wet pavement. I careened down the street behind them like an empty sled.

Jack, our policeman friend, happened to be a few blocks away when he heard all the racket and came running. He ran right into the prowler, who had been so frightened by what he thought were two wolves that he was almost glad to see a policeman.

By the time we arrived panting and puffing, Jack had the man covered with a gun and was emptying his pockets. He stepped back and motioned to the curb with his pistol. "Now you sit there till I call a prowl car to pick you up," he ordered the man. "I'm taking you in. And don't you move or I'll set these wolves on you."

He turned, winked at me, and left to phone from the house across the street where the owner, dressed in pajamas, was staring unbelievably from an upstairs window.

I was left alone quaking in my shoes and struggling to hold Kunu and Sitka back. Now that the chase had come

to a triumphant end, they were dying to get at the frightened man huddled on the curb—to lick his face in gratitude, if he only knew.

When the Community Protective Association heard the good news, the members were astonished to know what Kunu and Sitka had done. The fact that the prowler had run for his life because he thought Kunu was a wolf made them think differently about her. Maybe it was a good idea to have a wolf in the neighborhood after all.

Kunu became a kind of hero in the eyes of Denny Blaine. We no longer heard about the petition to get rid of her, for while it may have been sheer coincidence, burglaries in the community began to dwindle after that, and some months later the private police force was disbanded.

With the passing of the prowlers went our good friend Jack. The animals missed him on our nightly walks through Denny Blaine. His good spirit, however, lingered on for a long time in the old garage where we used to meet and talk together, for every time Kunu came by she sniffed to find his vagrant soul hiding in the chinks of the cement floor and would hold gentle discourse with it, as though it were Jack himself there in the small crevices.

20

By May, Seattle could hardly wait for the warm sun to break through the

winter-long overcast to shake itself dry like a drenched water spaniel. All at once, under clearing skies, bright-colored sails began to sprout like spring flowers on lakes and streams and along the ocean shores, and the soft balmy air sang with the purr and hum of speedboats and cabin cruisers plowing the rolling surf. If Seattle didn't have a chicken in every pot, it certainly seemed to have a boat in every garage.

Overnight the city was transformed into a sunny vacationland, with everyone speeding off in cars and trailers for nearby seaside resorts and mountain retreats.

Kunu was as eager as anyone to join in the outdoor fun. When she saw us gathering up camping gear and starting

to pack the car, she got just as excited as any of the kids. We had to tie her up to the rear platform of the station wagon to keep her from trampling all over us inside the car. There was little room left for a happy wolf to go hopping around with two dogs, six people, and a lot of luggage squeezed into a few feet of space. Hitching her up this way also made sure that we'd have some picnic lunch left by the time we reached our destination, for as soon as she hit that fresh country air with her nose out the window, she became as ravenous as a—yes, a wolf.

Her favorite spot was the seashore even though the growling surf had her worried at first, and she wasn't quite sure what all those crazy sea gulls screaming and flapping overhead had a mind to do. She felt better high up on the quiet beach where she spent hours digging make-believe wolf dens in the sand till the black tip of her tail was all that kept her in touch with the world.

If she wasn't digging in the sand, she was poking around in the treasure piles of driftwood and flotsam like an old woman at a rummage sale. Or she indulged in the ancient ritual of rolling in dead fish, for which we paid dearly all the way home in the stuffy car.

I sometimes got an awful itch to slip her from the leash and let her dash across the long gleaming stretches of the beach. Here was the place to do it, if anywhere.

"Your chance to be free, oh, wolf!" my heart sang to her as we stood together gazing at the distant shores. "Run, run," my heart leaped with her through the scattering shore birds at the edges of the surf. "Freedom has no end."

But I was also afraid. She might run off and never come back. There were the desolate hills and so many dead and fallen trees where she might stray and be lost forever. The

cold fear of this happening made me realize how much she had become a part of me from that wondrous moment when I first held her trembling in the palm of my hand, a little six-inch bit of wolf. Now I could never let her go.

It was at times like this when I might have let her run that I felt regret that I hadn't trained Kunu to obey like a dog. A dog trainer we met at the beach shamed me with her skill. She could deploy her four big police dogs across the sand in military fashion and with a flick of her fingers bring them back rushing to her feet.

It wasn't in me, I guess, to be an animal trainer. I was lucky if my dogs listened to me. That went for my children too. Aunt Lil was right. Elane and I were both lousy parents. We never taught our kids or animals how to behave. We were always worried we might squeeze everything out of them.

When the woman learned that Kunu was a wolf, she offered to train her. "I'll have her eating out of my hand in no time," she promised. "She'll obey orders and do all kinds of stunts and tricks, just like the animals you see in the circus. You might even get her on TV. She could bring you a lot of money. You could get rich. Here," she added, whipping out a business card from her jacket like a pistol. "Here's my address and a phone number where you can reach me."

"Do you think it's a good idea?" I later asked Elane.

"If you want a trained seal, not a wolf," she snapped. "Then you can show everybody how great you are. Isn't that what all this highfalutin animal training is about? Thank you, I'd rather have Kunu just as she is. The world's full of trained animals."

That was the end of that and I never regretted it.

Since we couldn't always be at the seashore, Kunu had

to find most of her summer pleasure at home. On hot days she discovered she could stand over the garden sprinklers and enjoy the sensual delight of getting her belly cooled, or put the spout from the sprinkler in her big hot jaws and get a refreshing mouth wash. We had to watch she didn't include more than the metal nozzle in her grinding grasp. The rubber-hose attachments could go in seconds with a clip of her rear teeth, which were as sharp as meat cleavers. That first summer at Denny Blaine we had to replace four expensive rubber garden hoses. She had neatly chopped them up into the size of small link sausages. After that we bought only the cheaper plastic kind to save money.

When the hillsides of Denny Blaine began to turn purple with ripening blackberries, we gathered up our pails and baskets and took Kunu berry-picking. She was an excellent picker, but she worked exclusively for herself. What she garnered went into her own basket, not ours. She had the most delicate way of curling her lips back and with her big incisors nipping off the succulent fruit without scratching her nose once on a thorn. Soon her face was as purple as a child's, and her furry chin ran with the rich juice of the berry. You'd think she was a bear, not a wolf. She loved fruit—all kinds. Later in the summer when the ripe pears and apples dropped off the trees in our backyard, Kunu was sure to clean them up if we didn't get there first.

For Kunu to eat all kinds of fruit was surprising enough, but we never expected her to be such a vegetarian, which certainly was quite a different picture of a wolf than most books give. Usually it's somebody's hide that is said to be the predominant diet of this animal. She did much more than occasionally nibble grass like a dog. There were a

great number of little green plants, the names of which I never came to know, that pleased her palate. In making our rounds in the neighborhood, I had to keep a strict eye on her to see that she didn't pick a neighbor's garden or flowerbed clean of certain favorite greens. Kunu had a lot of billy goat in her.

There was one green, however, that irritated the life out of her. It was the Christmas holly. The prickly spikes on the leaves infuriated her, making this festive plant of holiday cheer into a crown of thorns. She tore at the leaves with snapping fangs as though they were some terrible little pests that needed to be eradicated from the face of the earth. The more they pricked her, the angrier she became and the more determined she was to chop them up into tiny little bits. If I had let her get involved in this madness, she would have become a really neurotic wolf. To protect her, I dragged her away to more peaceful pursuits.

What was more surprising still was that wildlife seemed less tantalizing to her than fruits and greens. This wasn't according to the books; a wolf is supposed to be a predator.

Near our house was the Seattle Arboretum, where we took frequent walks. As a showpiece for Seattle, it had thousands of rare plants and flowers and a representative population of little animals. A squirrel or rabbit poking its nose out of a bush or around a tree sent Sitka into a wild frenzy. Not Kunu. She was the contemplative type. She'd rather look and observe an animal than go after it.

"Come, let's chase the bunny," I tried again and again to entice her, feeling embarrassed in the eyes of people whose Pekingese or toy poodle was ready to pursue and devour a butterfly or anything else that moved.

My wild animal tutorials turned out to be a flop. Kunu

didn't know what I was talking about. Sometimes I was glad people didn't know that she was a wolf. Clearly hunting was something a wolf had to learn from its parents at an early age. Since I didn't have the knack myself, Kunu never got the necessary training to become a respectable predator.

She did learn about moles, however, but all the credit for this goes to Kunu alone. She was self-taught. She had a fine ear for them and seemed to know their every move underfoot and then pounced on them and dug them up. But she never ate them. This was interesting, for naturalist who have studied the wolf know how much such small rodents can sometimes mean to the welfare of the wolf. But Kunu never knew what it was to have to pull in her stomach like her wild brethren when food got scarce and the going was tough. Why should she eat a mealy mole when she could get the best scraps from the table and a daily ration of a big bowl of crunchy dog cereal soaked in the juiciest gravies and full of the tastiest chunks of meat? People are much the same. Who eats a peanut-butter sandwich when he can have a steak?

It was not only good for Kunu to be outdoors during the summer, it was an absolute necessity as far as we were concerned. Summer was shedding time and Kunu dropped bagfuls of fuzz and hair all over the place. It was bad enough having it flying around in the yard, but indoors it was a housekeeper's nightmare. The undercoat of the wolf is specially thick and rich, much like the heavy wool of the lamb. It's the wolf's protection against the coldest subzero weather. If shed in the house, it's almost impossible to get out of the rugs. No vacuum cleaner can do it. The only way is to get down on your hands and knees and brush it out.

Kunu's soft wool drifted like the gentle snow around

the flowerbeds in the yard. It became a kind of proud trademark of the building material used by the birds in the neighborhood. They came flocking in from everywhere to get it for their nests. We could look out at the trees from almost any window in the house and see little eggs or tiny baby birds sitting snugly on chunks of soft pelt that came from Kunu's hide.

Because the wolf, unlike the dog, sheds both in early and late summer, it remains embarrassingly naked for most of the season. Without her gorgeous fur wraps on, Kunu looked as unglamorous as a Hollywood actress without her mink coat. Her queenly elegance was relegated to the common denominator of all animal life—skin and bones. By early fall, however, she was her resplendent self again in a new and gleaming coat of fur. Her outer coat seemed a little coarser than a dog's but her collar had a bigger and more beautiful ruff. She took a pride in her beauty and seemed to keep her coat always clean. We never found any foundation for stories that a wolf is naturally dirty and smells. A wolf does have a smell, but so do dogs and so do we. People spend millions of dollars every year to keep themselves from smelling. Most dogs, even the smallest, had more of a smell than Kunu, and one not nearly so pleasant. You had to put your nose to her pelt to get any odor. It reminded you of the sweetness of old hay. Hunters and trappers claim the wild wolf has a much stronger smell. Was it the diet that made Kunu different? Nobody seemed to know.

At the end of a long hot summer's day, we joined the parade of Seattle families to the drive-in movies to relax in the cool evening air. We filled the back of the station wagon with blankets and sleeping bags to make a night of it. Then we piled in the kids and animals. Kunu, of

course, came along. She liked nothing better than a car ride. If we left her at home alone, she'd only howl miserably for us and disturb the neighbors.

We always tried to get to the movie early enough so as not to miss all the animated cartoons put on for the benefit of the many children who attended. We took a family pride in sneering in derision at all the cars around us when the Big Bad Wolf appeared on the screen in his customary role of the mean and cruel villain.

"Look at all those dopes in the cars," we scoffed. "They believe all that junk about wolves!" The kids would take Kunu in their laps and stroke her fondly, saying, "Don't worry, we know you're not like that. You're a sweet wolf and we love you, if no one else does."

At intermission time came all the food—popcorn, cold drinks, ice cream, pizza pie—which Kunu enjoyed as much as any of us. Everybody ate too much and got too sleepy to be able to watch the second feature. Soon the rear of the car was heaped with animals and kids, all fast asleep. On top of the mound was Kunu, snoring away with the rest, but with a vigilant ear attuned to every strange sound coming over the loud speaker hanging in the car. She couldn't have been more at peace with the world if she were lying with a family of wolves in the solitude of the forest with the music of the wind blowing softly through the trees.

21

Like anyone else, Kunu had her special friends in Denny Blaine, and

then there were those she merely tolerated.

Most of her socializing took place on her daily walks, beginning early in the morning. The first person we usually met was old Mr. Hornsby, who lived a few doors away. He was a man in his late seventies who, though old and sick, was sprightlier than many young men who were still in bed when he was up and out of the house taking his early stroll.

He and Kunu hit it off from the start. I'm sure it was his quiet nature that appealed to Kunu, though I could never be sure just what subtle communion took place between Kunu and the people she met that determined how she felt about them.

It was common knowledge that Mr. Hornsby was about to die from an incurable cancer. Aware as he must have been of this himself, he had more to fear of death than a wolf, if he feared either at all. When you are about to shed your life, you are also ready to shed a lot of the nonsense that has gone with it, such as your prejudices. The only pity is that this happens so late in life for most of us.

My only worry about old Mr. Hornsby was the frailty of his body and how well he could stand up under the heavy weight of Kunu and her hardy affection when she jumped up to greet him. I held my breath many times to see him teeter with Kunu's big paws resting on his fragile shoulders.

"Oh, let her be, let her be," he remonstrated when I tried to take her down before she licked his hollow face clean with fervent kisses. "I don't get such love anymore," he smiled. "All I get is a handshake."

This moment of friendship was abruptly shattered, however, when the milkman came thundering into the street with his truck full of jangling milk bottles. Kunu went wild with fear and dived under the nearest parked car to hide. Everytime this happened, the poor driver was overcome with guilt. Much as he was pressed by a tight schedule, he recognized the terrible agony he was putting Kunu through with his noisy truck. He immediately turned off the motor and gently guided the truck to a noiseless stop at the curb. Then he began a highly involved bit of hand signaling to me through the windshield, trying to decide whether it might be best for him to wait till we walked by the truck before he delivered the milk or whether we should wait till he finished his job and then we could go on.

I was always amazed by his dogged conviction that one day Kunu would rise up and overcome her fear of his truck, even though there wasn't the faintest indication in her behavior that this could ever happen, for every time we met she'd cower and not move an inch till he had left the block. He and I both knew this, but somehow he had an undying faith in her and made this challenge a mission to prove his belief that animals, like people, if given half a chance, can overcome their handicaps.

The garbageman, on the other hand, had no considerations for man or beast. He came rolling into the street like a Sherman tank with his reeking truck and invaded the quiet of the morning with a thousand discourtesies and the vilest shouts and curses to the driver. He banged garbage cans to a pulp and set the inner cavernous stomach and grinding teeth of his machine going as though he were about to have it devour the whole block.

When this growling masticating gargantua appeared on the scene each week, it was a day of scourge for Kunu. She refused to go out of the house and hid under the couch or bed, or even better down in the deepest black pits of the cellar, till the last snorting sound of this horrible monster had passed and all was peace and quiet again.

Since this happened every Thursday morning, I had to either get up much earlier for our walk to beat the truck or wait till much later when it had disappeared from the scene. It was interesting to see how Kunu could anticipate the approach of Thursday. On Wednesday she heard the garbage battalions advancing into the adjoining neighborhoods. This was her sign and signal for her day of terror. By Wednesday night she had the shakes.

If there was anyone who could quiet her worried soul,

it was our pipe-smoking philosophizing mail carrier. Our mailbox was located in the backyard, where Kunu stayed most of the time, so she and the mailman were old friends. He made it a point to give her a little extra time to soothe her nerves after the ordeal she went through every Thursday. He would sit down on the back steps, light his pipe, and carry on a long discourse with her about this and that in the world. By the time he finished, he had poured out enough editorial copy to fill a city newspaper.

Many times when I heard him through my open window I thought he was talking to Elane working in the garden. He had so many interesting things to say that I had to stop my work and listen, impressed by the breadth and depth of his knowledge, only to find out later that he had been speaking all along to Kunu, not Elane. What a rare philosopher he was to get both animals and man to listen to him!

A cocky person never came off so well with Kunu. A fellow like this lived in the neighborhood for a short time. If he had stayed on long in Denny Blaine, I'm sure that Kunu, out of self-pride, would have finally had to slice him up into ribbons, he was such a pest. Worse than that, he was a tormentor of animals. Such persons, you learn, are usually insecure with animals and try to hide this by bombast and a stance of fearlessness. Underneath they are scared to death of them, are ashamed that they are, and hate animals for it. They always have to test themselves by harrying an animal to see if it will really bite or hurt them.

Some years before, he had been a policeman in Spokane, where he developed this kind of neurotic fascination about animals by answering calls of people who reported roaming dogs they thought were vicious. It was his job to

go out and investigate such cases, and more often than not he shot the animal, satisfying the complaint and feeling safer himself.

To see his face light up with excitement when he heard Kunu was a wolf, you'd think that he was a person who could appreciate this animal. But when he began to relate with savage satisfaction the experiences he had in Spokane, and I saw how roughly he began to handle Kunu and how she responded to this with rumbling growls, I knew I was in for trouble. After that, I always tried to avoid him.

One time, however, he didn't let us get by when we met him on the street. He came over, determined to press Kunu to the breaking point.

He got right down to business. "Now let me show you what to do if a dog attacks you," he said with growing excitement. "It can be any animal—even a wolf." He proceeded to demonstrate on Kunu. "You just grab the lower jaw like this with one hand and press it down hard, pushing the jaw against the chest."

Kunu squealed in pain.

"See," he smiled, "it hurts and they can't bite."

Kunu began to growl threateningly.

"You'd better let her go," I said, grasping his hand to stop him. "She doesn't like that."

"I know," he said, suddenly releasing his grip and jumping back away from her. He stood there gloating over her discomfort. "No animal likes it because they know you've got the best of them. Of course, it doesn't usually happen that easily. She wasn't angry when I grabbed her. That's when you really have to know how to jump them. Let me show you," he said, coming toward me.

"Look," I said, getting a little angry myself, "I'm not interested. I'm not trying to make her mean. She likes peo-

ple and I don't want her to hate anyone—not even you. But if you keep bothering her, she might go at you; and if anything happens, the wolf will get all the blame, not you. Now if you don't mind," I said pushing my way clear of him, "I'd like to get home."

It was good riddance when he left the neighborhood. I'm sure Kunu would have agreed. It bothered her to get angry at anyone.

Phonies who pretended they loved Kunu could be almost as obnoxious, although she was more tolerant of them since they had no hostile feelings toward her. Some were really sad people, like the woman alcoholic we met from time to time. I don't know if it's fair calling her an alcoholic, but she seemed to be drunk every time we ran into her. She was a woman of some means who lived in one of the big houses down near the lake and drove a fancy sports car. When she saw us on the street she'd stop the car with a loud screeching of brakes, jump out, throw herself on Kunu's neck, and start kissing her all over. Kunu was so overpowered by this onslaught of pretense that she didn't know what to do and could only look awfully chagrined.

"How would you like to come and swim with me in my swimming pool?" she gurgled, bringing her face so close that Kunu had to draw back.

What worried me was that she might get hurt in her drunken stupor, by Kunu either slapping a big paw in her face or greeting her with a hard grasp that might throw her into a hysterical fright. It was to Kunu's credit that she never even growled at the woman, but I could tell by Kunu's cold eyes that she found the ordeal a most unpleasant one.

There was one admirer of Kunu we never met. He was a

ham radio operator who lived somewhere on the fringes of Denny Blaine. His great joy in life, it turned out, was to clue in on any fires in the city by staying tuned to the frequency band of the fire department. Since he couldn't always be at the set, he found that Kunu could be a great help here, as he told me over the phone one day when he called me up.

"Do you know," he said with a warm laugh, "that wolf of yours tells me every time there's a fire in any part of Seattle. I don't have to stay by my set anymore and get all the hell I used to from the old lady for not doing any work and wasting my time. When I hear that howl I figure your wolf's picked up the fire sirens and I go to the earphones. Sure enough, there's a fire. Brother, she's got a high-powered receiver in each ear."

There were some people, like one of the city bus drivers, who showed a community pride in Kunu. Whenever he happened to meet us on his late evening run down Denny Way, he made it a point, like a driver of a sight-seeing bus, to lecture the riders about the wolf that lived in Denny Blaine. If he wasn't too pressed for time, he stopped the bus and invited everyone to get out and meet the wolf.

As he put it to me one day, "On my job you get tired seeing the same people every day. You want something different. That wolf of yours is it. When I come down this way, I say to my riders, 'Now I'm going to show you something you'd never believe—a real wolf that lives down here in Denny Blaine. If she's out taking her walk with her owner, I'm inviting you all to come along and see her. I'm going to stop the bus for a moment and get out and pet her.' " He laughed to himself. "Boy, when I tell them that,

they sure perk up. Lot of 'em at first thought I was just pulling their leg."

It always amazed me how many did follow him off the bus to see Kunu. He was a natural barker for an animal show. While I stood quietly to one side, he went on with a big harangue about Kunu and wolves, expanding at length on all the stories and information I had told him. His little following stood around with mouths open, astonished at the wisdom and knowledge of their bus driver. Anyone of them would have agreed that to ride the bus with him was worth much more than the twenty-five-cent fare.

22

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Kunu came from the people of Denny

Blaine themselves who wanted to place a statue of her at the community pond. The idea started out like that, but Josh, the sculptor who made the statue of Kunu, had a much larger and deeper purpose in mind.

I became acquainted with Josh not long after he moved into the neighborhood. When he came over the first time to see Kunu, they became immediate friends. While I never came to know him too well, for he was a very shy and retiring man, I did know that our wolf came to mean something so very important to him that he, as an artist, wanted to tell others about.

He spent many hours just sitting on our back stairs observing Kunu in the yard. Then one day his eyes lit up

while he was watching Darien play with her. "I've got it!" he exclaimed, almost dropping the stub pipe he always carried in his mouth. He was all excited and up on his feet now, standing almost taller than his six feet. "I knew that wolf had something to tell me. I knew it all along. Under all the cruelty and meanness we may see in man or wolf, there is peace, if we are only willing to find it. Yes," he pondered aloud, "I shall sculpture her in wood and call her the Peace Wolf."

Nobody but Josh at first realized how much this idea meant to him till he rolled up his sleeves and got to work. He went up into the tall timber of the wild Cascades in his small army jeep, searching in the deep forest for trees big enough to match his dream. He would not take any ordinary wood, but only the rich cedar of this country. When he finally found what he wanted, he made camp and began his long arduous task.

Weekend after weekend he went off in the early dawn in his little jeep piled with provisions, tools, and chain saw. Squeezing his long legs into the driver's seat, he waved good-bye to his family and headed for his camp high up at the headwaters of the mighty Snoqualmie River, where he hacked and sawed the eight- to ten-feet-thick stumps of cedar like a Paul Bunyan. He worked till it was dark, and then after dark went on working by the flickering light of an old camp lantern.

Word of what Josh was up to got around in Denny Blaine and the curious drove back in the woods to see him. Soon they were sharing in his heavy toil, bringing their families along to work all day, not to return to their homes till late at night, their tired and worn bodies smelling fragrant with the sweet balm of the cedar.

There were heartaches over chains broken on the saw,

and the axle that snapped on the jeep pulling the huge thousand-pound slabs of cedar trunk over the rough forest floor. There was the toil and the sweat of hoisting huge timbers onto groaning trailers to cart back to Josh's yard.

For weeks Denny Blaine resounded with the steady ring of hammer and chisel while Josh worked in his backyard, fashioning the massive cedar trunks into the body, legs, and head of a wolf. People came to sit and watch, and children vied with each other to offer their help, hand him his tools, or do his smallest bidding so as to share in his dream. He had promised them, had he not, that they could play and climb over the wooden wolf when it was finished?

Josh never believed that sculpture should be left untouched by little hands, as so many are, garrisoned like forts behind an iron picket fence or set godlike high on tall pedestals. What his statue had to say was not to be seen only by the elevated eyes.

"You have to experience the Peace Wolf with your whole body," he said, "not just take a far look at it. I want the children to play on it, touch it, struggle to climb up on it, smell its delicate perfume. The younger you start, the better you can understand the Peace Wolf."

The statue turned out to be that big—ten feet long and eight feet high—when he finally finished it some months later. It was as he said it would be—a Peace Wolf. The big head hung low to show the wolf drinking quietly at some imagined woodland pool or stream, not poised viciously, with bared fangs, ready to kill, as the wolf is usually portrayed.

"It's great, and it's Kunu too," I told him, which pleased him much.

A day of celebration was held and people came from

near and far to admire the Peace Wolf in Josh's backyard. Even Kunu came to sniff with awe this mighty monarch in wood that almost dwarfed her to the size of a small dog.

All agreed it was something Denny Blaine should be proud of, and someone suggested it should be placed at the community pond, where others could see and enjoy it. The spot was a natural setting for a statue of a wolf drinking water. A letter of petition was drawn up and signed by more than one hundred and fifty persons who came to the ceremony, and a small group volunteered to present the request to the Seattle Park Board, who decided such matters for the city parks, of which Denny Blaine was about the smallest.

The Park Board, in turn, as was its practice, referred the matter to the Municipal Art Commission for its judgment. Wisely Seattle had such a group, made up of prominent artists of the community, to decide on the aesthetic value of any objects of art to be placed in the city parks. The assumption was that the artist, not the politician, should make such judgments. It was customary for the Park Board, if it had the necessary funds, to accept and carry out the recommendations of the Municipal Art Commission.

Members of the Municipal Art Commission came to Denny Blaine for an on-site inspection of the pond and the statue of the Peace Wolf in Josh's backyard, following which they supported the petition and recommended to the Park Board the installation of the sculpture. To save the city any expense, a few citizens offered to pay the costs involved in placing it at the pool.

Success seemed assured. All that remained was to secure the final approval by the Park Board. Then, a few weeks before this was to take place, a self-appointed arbiter of

good taste and propriety in the community set about destroying any chance of this happening.

Dr. C. Tanner, an art professor, had up to this time withheld from publicly disapproving of the project, although it was rumored what his feelings were. He had held his fire, *assuming that his fellow artists on the Municipal Art Commission would have enough good sense to deny the petition.* He felt so sure of this that to the students in his class he cited, as an example of the poor artistic judgment of a community, Denny Blaine's desire to place the Peace Wolf on public display. He took elaborate photographs of Denny Blaine pond to show to his students in support of his viewpoint, contending, "Just what does a statue of a wolf have to do in such a setting? Perhaps a totem pole, or an Indian, or a famous leader or pioneer of early Seattle, but not a wolf! We don't even know that there ever were wolves here. And if there were, what does it matter? What have they contributed to Seattle? Thank goodness we have an art commission to keep out all such nonsense from our beautiful city parks."

Dr. Tanner didn't know it, but at the very time he was lecturing his students, the Municipal Art Commission was approving the erection of the Peace Wolf in Denny Blaine. The news came to him as a great shock. He had lost face with his students and friends. In their eyes he was no longer the great authority he pretended to be.

Determined to salvage his dignity, he went from door to door and asked people to join with him in disapproving the action that the Park Board was about to take in favor of the Peace Wolf. He did most of his campaigning among the wealthy and influential residents of Denny Blaine whose names and positions would make the Park Board think twice before they made their final decision.

The Park Board came to Denny Blaine to investigate. They saw Josh and hoped for some compromise that would satisfy everyone. They suggested placing the wolf in some other place where nobody would mind. But Josh wouldn't let his neighbors down. He refused. Yet neither did he want them to fight for what they believed was right. Josh was an artist, not a politician. He refused to enter this arena to muddy what he believed in, and asked others to do the same. The Park Board voted down the petition of the people of Denny Blaine.

The Peace Wolf still stands in Josh's backyard, where the children of Denny Blaine come and play on it. Perhaps someday it will find its rightful place at the Denny Blaine pond.

23

By the second year Kunu was old enough to mate.

Her sexual interest, however, had been evident much earlier than this. During the early period of her life, for example, there were adolescent crushes on Hexie and Sitka, and their play had resembled sex play. But since Hexie was just too diminutive for Kunu, there was, in reality, only Sitka. Our hopes had always been that we would get a litter from Kunu and Sitka from which to choose a male that would one day replace Sitka in our home.

Kunu came into her first heat period in December, 1960, when she was close to two years old. From the few books available on the subject, December seemed rather early in the year.

In all that has been written on the wolf, its sex life is

hardly ever mentioned. Surprisingly little is known about it. Man has been preoccupied by the economic problems caused by the wolf, not its sexual behavior, and what little we do know has come primarily from the artificial setting of the zoo or from poorly kept records. Field studies are most sketchy in this area.

We know that the female wolf comes into heat only once a year, in the spring, unlike the dog, which can have two heat periods, spring and fall. The period is heralded by a discharge of blood that goes on for forty to forty-five days. It is believed that only during five of these days—evidently the fertile period—will the female accept the male for copulation.

When Kunu began bleeding for the first time, we wondered whether everything was right with her. December seemed early to us, for the gestation period of the wolf is sixty to sixty-three days, the same as the dog, and we knew that cubs are usually born in April or May.

With the help of my two older daughters, Karen, now a freshman in college, and Jana, a sophomore in high school, plus a wife who remembered her own adolescence, I was finally able to put the whole problem in its right perspective: that not all females mature in the same way or at the same time. Since this was Kunu's first heat period she might be "off" as some women are with their first menstrual period. As it turned out, this was correct, for in the following years Kunu did become "regular," always starting in February.

We were still puzzled, however, by the long period of bleeding Kunu was going through; it seemed so much longer than any female dog we'd ever had. We didn't know at the time that a wolf's period of bleeding was normally longer than a dog's.

In addition to such problems came the growing realization and disappointment that Sitka was getting nowhere with Kunu. Sitka was now more than thirteen years old and might not have many more years to live. If they ever were to mate, it had to be soon. Because of his age, we wondered whether it wasn't too late now.

Sitka, an experienced male, had fathered many litters of pups, not only with females we owned, but with many others in the neighborhoods where we lived, both in New York City and Vermont. In fact, he was considered quite a rake, and was chased and shot at by many dog owners who wanted to protect their females from a brute as big as he.

With his many years of experience, one would think Sitka was well prepared to handle Kunu. But it didn't work out that way. She was more than a handful for him. She had the most confounding combination of coyness and downright cussedness. She used all her wiles to excite him, and when he was full of warmth and tender passion, she turned on him and gave him a good hard nip that made him yowl in pain. Feeling remorse for him, Kunu then came bellying up to him for forgiveness, only to do the same thing again when he mounted her. Frustration led to doubt, and doubt led to failure. He lost his old touch and became an impotent lover. The mating never came off. By the end of Kunu's first heat period, Sitka was ready for the analytic couch. Kunu was ready for another lover.

But if Sitka couldn't have Kunu, neither could any other dog. He saw to that. We never had to worry that some other dog might make her pregnant. There was, of course, Hexie, who conveniently lived in the house. Sitka knew this well and kept him away too. On several occasions they had quite a fight about it.

The few times Hexie sneaked by Sitka to be alone with

Kunu turned out to be sad affairs. His spirit was big but his body was too small. His front paws reached only halfway up her tail. Even Kunu thought it was funny, and began to play with him like he was a pup again, the way they used to when they were both young.

All these passionate goings-on in the house were sometimes more than we could take. Having one animal in the house can teach kids a lot about sex. Having two panting males and a vibrant female wolf in season was more sex instruction than any of us needed. So as to retain some semblance of sanity in the house, we decided to separate the animals from each other by putting them in different rooms for part of the day. Then came the howls of misery that were almost as bad as the sex scenes.

Aunt Lil refused to come to the house at all. She called it "that bawdy house." Still at the same time she seemed hopeful that her Hexie would father a litter of Kunu's puppies. The very thought of this combination of a wolf and a dachshund made our hair stand on end. Nothing in the world of animal breeding could be worse. We could thank the Lord that Hexie was a runt.

24

The next year was no better. We knew then that Sitka and Kunu

would never mate. We were faced with finding another male.

Our thoughts still were on having a combination malamute and wolf offspring. The problem was where to find another malamute.

As close as Seattle was to Canada and Alaska, you'd think there would be malamutes all over the place. But there weren't, we soon found out. One good reason was that Seattle hardly ever had any snow. Since these animals were thought of only as sled dogs, not house pets, very few people kept them, even though an hour's drive away, in the mountains, there was enough snow to last for most of the year. But the sport of sled-dog racing, except for a small

group of enthusiasts, had never taken hold, as did skiing, which brought thousands of people out to the mountain slopes daily.

Another reason for the scarcity was fear of the malamute. For years people had been indoctrinated by a steady stream of hair-raising tales like *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and similar books that made this dog seem more fit for the bloody brawls of the raw North than the gentle surroundings of the civilized home with its wall-to-wall carpeting.

I began to make the rounds of the various kennels to find a mate for Kunu. "A wolf?" the kennel owners looked at me as though I was trying to get one of their Park Avenue blue bloods to have an affair with some call girl from the Lower East Side. This royalty of registered hounds was indeed high society.

"My wolf is just as pure-blooded as any," I stuck up for Kunu. "She's a pure Mackenzie Valley wolf on both sides of the family. Only she's not recognized by the American Kennel Club. Don't forget it was only a few years ago that the Alaskan malamute got on their books as an accepted breed."

One malamute owner confided, "I'd like to, fellow, but my wife's against it. She's afraid if we're caught we'd lose our registry. You know, we're not allowed to crossbreed. We can't take chances while this is our livelihood. I'm sorry. I'd like nothing better than to have a wolf-malamute cross. They say they make a real fine animal and a great sled dog."

I finally did find a couple who had a malamute kennel and were willing to go along with the idea if we promised to keep it quiet. They had always wanted a cross like this. They offered their beautiful handsome three-year-old stud,

Storm King, as Kunu's mate. He was their best producer of offspring and had walked off with a whole wallful of ribbons at dog shows. The arrangement was that they'd get first choice of the litter in place of a stud fee. I jumped at the chance. There just wasn't another malamute around for Kunu.

When I arrived at the kennel with Kunu, the wife was bringing Storm King out on a leash. He was a strong, sturdy, big-chested brute, and it took all the power the woman had to hold him in once he got near Kunu. In a flash he was transformed from a poised gentleman into a raving sex fiend. But Kunu played it cool and coy, just as she had with Sitka. She allowed Storm King to enjoy all the delights of preliminary love play without interference. By the time he had finished, he was overflowing with self-confidence and jumped to her and began to pump in earnest. All at once Kunu made a swift swing at him with her flashing teeth to give him a passionate nip of approval. But instead of accepting it as such and returning it in kind, it scared the life out of him, including all his sexual prowess. With a cry of terror, he leaped off her back when he saw the awesome row of teeth come at him. Kunu's jaws snapped shut with the sound of a steel trap, missing him by a bare few inches. His curled tail between his legs, Storm King lit out full speed for the safety of the kennels, only to collide with his mistress as the frightened woman screamed and jumped into her dog's path. It was just downright luck he didn't toss her head over heels.

The woman stood there so badly shaken it took her a few minutes to gather her senses together. Then in a quaking voice full of emotion she said, "That's all. No more. That wolf's too dangerous. We can't allow our champion to get hurt. She almost slashed his face. There would

be no more dog shows for him. No one would want him for a stud. I'm sorry," she said looking pale and weak. She was using both hands now to keep Storm King from dragging her back to his pen. "I must talk to my husband," she said and turned toward a row of small neat buildings at the far end of the yard.

Kunu and I had to wait for a long time before anyone showed up. Finally her husband appeared alone and walked over to us. He seemed concerned.

"I've been talking it over with my wife," he said when he came up to us, "and we're both worried about what your wolf might do to our prize dog. He's worth a lot of money to us and we just can't take any chances. Most females we service don't act quite as spirited as your wolf. I'm afraid we can't go on."

"Well, I guess that's that," I said feeling low. "I doubt if I'll ever get her bred."

"We feel pretty bad about it too," he said. "We had our hearts set on getting one of those pups. But there is still one way left, if you're interested. Would you want to try artificial insemination? We've used Storm King like this before for a few females who were too shy or skittish to mate. I'd be glad to call up our vet and arrange it. What do you say?"

"All right," I said, grasping at the last straw.

"I'll phone him this afternoon," he said. "I'll give you a buzz to let you know when we can do it. I say the sooner the better."

I got the phone call that evening and was told to come the next day to the vet's office, after hours, around seven at night. I gathered the vet wasn't so sure about bringing a wolf into his waiting room during the day when it was filled with dogs and people.

Kunu and I arrived at the office first and walked into an empty waiting room. Kunu immediately got interested in everything around, going from chair to chair and covering the floor with her eager nose to pick up all the telltale smells of animals and people. When the vet appeared at the reception desk, she ran over to greet him with wild squeals of joy.

He patted her head. "Well, she's certainly friendly enough," he said. "Who'd have thought a wolf could be so tame. Most dogs I see aren't half as friendly. They start to growl or get testy as soon as they get near the office. Some have to be carried in. The way she's feeling here, relaxed and happy, it ought to come off pretty well."

Presently Storm King and his owner arrived. As soon as he spotted Kunu, Storm King got wary and slinked close to his master. Kunu, on the other hand, behaved as though they were old friends.

In the rear office, a typical veterinarian's operating room, the vet proceeded to give us instructions. "Because of the bad experience between these two animals yesterday, it's very unlikely that we can get Storm King excited enough over Kunu to take off any semen to inject. Instead, we got hold of a French poodle in heat. Mike, my assistant here, will bring in Lady Love so as to excite Storm King. Then Mike will draw off the semen and I'll insert it into the vagina with this long syringe. Now, Mr. Hellmuth," he turned to me, "if you just put Kunu up on the table and talk to her and keep her calm, we'll do the rest."

I did as he said and got Kunu on the table; she stood amazingly composed, probably because she was intrigued by all that was going on around her.

For the next few minutes I thought I was in an operating room of a hospital where everything is so highly organized

and professional that you forget all about your squeamishness over body function.

When it was all over, the vet said, coming over to rub Kunu's ears, "She certainly was good. I wish I could say it will succeed as easily as it's done. Artificial insemination is always a big gamble, even with dogs. I don't know if it's ever been done with wolves. I couldn't find anything in the literature about it. We don't even know the best time to inseminate wolves—when the female is most likely to be fertile. I suggest we try again in another week, just to be sure. Even then we can't say it will take."

25

Now the days of waiting began, for everyone at our house assumed that

Kunu was pregnant and it wouldn't be long before she'd have a cute litter of bouncing babies. My words of caution that we couldn't be sure left no impression on the family whatsoever. The question was not, "Will she have babies?" but "Where's the best place for Kunu to have them?"

As the only man in a house filled with women, I felt a little out of step with the inexorable tempo of maternity that everyone else seemed to be marching to.

A pair of mating wolves in the wilds have their own way of setting up housekeeping without all the fuss. They go off together and dig a den in some bluff or commanding height. They may dig several dens, and for each make

one or more entrances. These dens may be close by each other or miles apart so that the parents may remove their young to safety if danger intrudes. They may also prefer, as some people do, to remodel someone else's house and move in. This could be an old rabbit or badger hole or something as snug as a hole in a tree stump.

Kunu had no such elaborate choices in our house. She seemed, nevertheless, to be just as happy about making her den under the bed where Elane and I slept.

We could tell how much this den meant to her by the way she growled whenever anyone peeked under the overhanging bedspread. It was here that she dragged all her many little possessions, like old soup bones, shoes, and a wide selection of toys from Darien's room. Here too was a sizable collection of my own things, like pencils, notebooks, and gum erasers from my desk. And it appeared that this would be the place where she'd have her young.

There was no one who was more convinced than Elane that Kunu was going to have babies. It became a real obsession with her. Now that two of our girls were of college age, maybe she was anticipating what it would be like to be a grandmother. She was certainly as conscientious, being the first one up in the morning to see that Kunu had an early breakfast and was well fed.

She went through no end of trouble shopping around to buy the best meat and to prepare the tastiest of dishes for Kunu. It began to dawn on us that we were getting a steadier diet of hot dogs and beans than we were accustomed to. What we thought was a delicious stew on the stove for us always turned out to be just another meal for Kunu.

The weeks went by and there was no change in Kunu. Elane, however, still clung tenaciously to her position,

carefully marking off days until due date on the kitchen calendar. She believed so strongly that even after she had crossed off the final day when the babies were to arrive she still didn't change her mind.

She said, "Babies are not always born on time. Some are prematures and some come late. Maybe Kunu is a late producer. Anyway, who knows enough about wolves to be sure?"

It wasn't till a month later that she finally gave up. I felt terribly sorry for her. Somehow those little baby wolves had come to mean everything to Elane. But it seemed that we would have to be satisfied with only one wolf, for another year at least.

Even though Kunu was denied the experience of motherhood, she matured considerably between the ages of three and four. It wasn't her physical growth that caught your eye so much (for that remained fairly constant) as it was the changes in her personality. Her temperament showed new facets we hadn't seen before. In some ways, she behaved more like a dog, if that's right to say.

For example, she indicated, as dogs do, a greater discrimination among people. Where before she just about loved everybody and anybody, this wasn't true anymore. She began to develop more of the feelings and sensitivities of a watchdog toward our house, our yard, and our automobile. She may have gotten this from Hexie, who barked at people who came to the house or near the car, making a bigger fuss about some than others, depending upon how well she knew or liked them. Kunu couldn't bark to make her feelings known the way a dog does, but she did use the sign language of her tail to say the same thing.

Ordinarily the wolf carries its tail in a drape, hanging loosely to the ground. If it goes up, the wolf is angry, and

the higher it goes up, the angrier the wolf is. I've never seen Kunu's tail go straight up, even under the most anger-provoking situations. The highest it has reached is about three inches above the level of the back.

I learned to watch Kunu's tail when we met people or dogs on our walks. If she didn't wag it, or cry her little love songs, but instead began to raise it, I knew that she wasn't feeling congenial about the acquaintance. At such times I saw to it that she didn't make physical contact. I'm sure that many of our friends never figured out why I didn't urge a closer friendship between them and Kunu.

I could understand her behavior. Each one of us has his own feelings about people we meet, even for the first time. We may not understand just why it is that we feel a certain way about this or that person, but something inside us—some feeling related to the past perhaps—tells us how to respond. Whatever the reason, a certain reaction of friendliness, indifference, or hostility takes place. If we are unfriendly, the social amenities have taught us how to cover up.

A wolf, on the other hand, is more honest with his feelings, whatever they be. His tail lets you know right away how he feels about you, that is, if you can read his tail language. Other wolves can, of course, and in this way they easily communicate with each other in a frank and open manner.

Kunu could also be as jealous as any dog. If either Elane or I were alone with Kunu, everything was fine. But let our youngest child, Darien, show up and Kunu was immediately jealous, growling with a thundering voice that made you shudder while she held her open jaws threateningly at Darien's throat, warning her off. Darien, as handicapped as she was, got the message loud and clear. This

was something new to Darien and it bothered her at first because Kunu had never shown her such resentment before. They still remained the best of friends, but mostly when they were alone together.

The danger of Kunu hurting someone seriously was very remote. She was very careful how she used her teeth, whether in anger, hunger, or play. Darien sometimes held a cookie in her mouth and offered it to Kunu. When Darien first tried this, I thought for a moment that her nose would go along with the cookie when Kunu grasped it, but Kunu always took it from her lips with the greatest care.

In anger, Kunu's growl was much bigger than her bite. Sometimes I forgot to pay attention to it when I was in a hurry to pick up a dish of leftover food she didn't want removed, and she clamped her teeth on my bare hand. It hurt, for it was sharp and firm, but it wasn't vicious. It meant as much as somebody giving you a good hard shove for being impolite and rude. Kunu had too much love in her heart to hurt you badly. She behaved like any member of a family where the feelings of respect and love predominate. Where there's love, the fang, no more than the hand, need not be cruel.

The few encounters that Kunu had with dogs she disliked were never savage. They were swift and rapid—a few sharp clips with the teeth—and that was it. Kunu was never the fighter that Sitka was, ready to tear a dog to pieces or fight to death.

One night on our walk she got free, and the first thing she did was to square an old score with a neighbor's dog. The thrashing she gave him was something she had been wanting to do for a long time. To her this dog was an utter pest and nuisance the way he barked at us every time we

went by his house. Kunu hated this yakety-yak night after night. All she wanted to do is let the dog know in no uncertain terms how she felt. When she finished her brief but firm chastisement, she came loping back home after me.

She administered much the same treatment to another dog she caught taking her food. She had left an unfinished breakfast in the basement to go on one of our early morning walks. When she returned she found that a big spaniel had come in the open door and was finishing off her meal. She got him as he tried to escape past her and gave him a couple of hard nips on the neck that made him howl. A dog might well have used this occasion to fight a bloody battle with the intruder.

Once Kunu had expressed displeasure or anger, she had to make up almost immediately after. She wasn't one to carry a grudge. She had to make peace with the world and herself following any blowup. Everyone in the family had run-ins with Kunu from time to time. Some of these turned out to be real knockdown brawls. But when the fighting was over, Kunu had to know you were still her friend. She couldn't stand the pain of rejection for one moment. She came crawling up to you on her belly for forgiveness and ready to offer a paw in peace and goodwill. Such an attitude represents a high degree of social resilience even among men.

Maturity to Kunu never meant giving up her sense of fun and play. She believed dearly that life was fun. She had that rare youthful feeling about her that only a few human adults retain with age. She and Hexie, for instance, could play and enjoy each other now as much as when they were pups. She was always ready to roughhouse or have a free-for-all with any of us.

Neither did Kunu's curiosity ever flag, and this was

probably the most wonderful thing about her. Life was always full of new and inviting questions to explore and solve. If I had allowed her to lead me on wherever she wished to go, I would never have reached home again, for the search would have gone on forever. Even in the few blocks that was Denny Blaine, each inch was for her full of a thousand mysteries. Kunu made me aware of how soon man pulls down the shades on his life, never realizing that the bright world he believes in is but one very small dark room in an infinite universe.

26

In 1963, when she was four, Kunu had the saddest year of her life. Or if it wasn't, it should have been. First Hexie died, and only a few months later Sitka passed away. Kunu was left without a playmate. All that remained was our family.

Man has never ascertained what a tragedy such as this may mean to an animal. He can only guess in terms of his own feelings, which may not at all be what an animal experiences. The romance of death is man's privately espoused province from which all animals are excluded, as they are from the sacred visions of his supernatural worlds. [Thus Kunu, upon the death of her best friend, Hexie, had no monuments to put up, tears to shed, or prayers to say. Yet there was no doubt but that she missed him. Her fervent howls attested to this. The difference was that Kunu

made no issue about where her friend may have gone after he disappeared. All she felt blue about was that he wasn't where he always was, next to her. That was the pity. The rest was philosophy.

Hexie went slowly, over a period of weeks, so that the final estrangement didn't come as an abrupt shock to Kunu. Hexie was the victim of an ailment common among dachshunds due to their elongated spinal column, so easily subject to strain and damage. Man had originally developed this breed to hunt for him with efficiency and speed among the undergrowth of field and forest. He had not calculated that the animal would end up as a pet in modern houses and big city apartments where he would have to walk up and down stairs with that long spine of his. It is believed that fractures and damage to the spine cause calcification deposits to set in, pinching off the nerves and paralyzing body function.

Whatever brought on the difficulty for Hexie, the medical fact remained that he was unable to walk even after he had received all the treatment and care possible. He was constantly seeing veterinarians and being in and out of hospitals. He kept getting worse. Finally any movement of the body became excruciatingly painful for him so that he could only lie in one spot, unable to move at all. To make him comfortable, we put him in a low wooden crate made soft with plush pillows and placed him near the radiator in a corner of the living room where he could keep warm.

Aunt Lil, of course, was most concerned for the welfare of her dog. She brought him that famous heating pad we had used when Kunu was little, and she made up warm covers so that he wouldn't shiver during the night. As he grew fainter, she brought flowers to brighten up the room.

Instead, the place soon began to look and smell like a funeral parlor, and with Hexie lying there immobilized in a wooden box, you couldn't help but feel that he was already laid out in his casket.

To save Aunt Lil those awful last hours when Hexie was dying, we took him off to the vet, knowing full well we would never see him again. The vet told us that the pain Hexie was suffering was about as much as his hardy little spirit could take, intimating that the best thing to do was to put him to sleep, but leaving this final decision entirely up to us.

The many difficult emotional problems inherent in the practice of euthanasia can be gleaned when one faces the decision to put a pet to sleep. As merciful as this decision may be to the animal, it can be more than any physical pain to the one who has to make it. To sign a death warrant for anyone, even if only a pet, is to threaten yourself with death, the guilt can be so great.

"Yes," I said with heavy heart when I called up the vet and told him the family decision. "Go ahead. But please save his collar."

It was the cruel truth, and it has to be admitted, that it was also costing us more money than we could afford to keep Hexie alive to the last moment. Five to ten dollars a day was more than we could go on paying for long with a large family to support and other animals to feed.

As happens after death, new accommodations are made. Kunu became more attached to Sitka. He wasn't much of a friend, much less a mate for her at his age, anymore than an octogenarian husband might be for a pretty young wife. But like a jealous, crotchety old man, he still guarded her harshly from the prying interests of younger males. We

never realized how much Sitka kept Kunu from meeting other dogs till he himself no longer was around to keep them away.

Sitka died only a few months after Hexie and right near the end of Kunu's heat period. He was sixteen years of age, which is a ripe old age for any dog. What brought on his death was a serious kidney infection, with accompanying problems of elimination. As a consequence, he had to be kept outdoors most of the time. He quickly faded from the big strong sled dog that he once was to an old dried-up frame, thin and sickly, who had neither the will nor the energy to carry on in life.

When Sitka died, Kunu was left alone. But not for long. He died in the morning, and by afternoon, before we had even disposed of the body, she had cast her eye on a neighbor's dog, Frisky. Never was love at first sight so dramatic, nor the forgetfulness of the memory of the dead so complete.

In the name of my good and faithful friend, Sitka, I took up cudgels for him. I decided that since we could not have any offspring from him and Kunu, or any other malamute, there wouldn't be any breeding at all with any dog.

With a neighborhood as full of eligible male dogs as Denny Blaine was, this mission of mine turned out to be more of a headache than I had at first envisioned. Streams of panting males came flocking after us on our walks, as if Kunu were the Queen of Sheba. They kept me hopping around her like a royal eunuch, driving them off with a big stick.

I considered myself lucky when I got her back into the house without mishap. But one morning while we were asleep, Darien let the whole lecherous gang in through the

front door. Kunu was in her den under our bed at the time when the mob came thundering up the stairs.

When I realized what was going on, I leaped from the bed looking for something, anything, to get my hands on to drive them out of the room. All that was handy were my pants hanging over the chair. I grabbed them and began swinging, lashing the yelping herd as they scattered for the safety of the stairs and thundered down like stampeding cattle. I flogged them all the way down the stairs and out the front door, with everything flying out of the pants' pockets like missiles—loose change, keys, wallet, pocket-knife—whizzing in all directions and bombarding the walls and ceilings.

Fortunately Kunu's mating period soon came to an end, and the cause of chastity had triumphed. But the victory was a hollow one. Kunu was still without a mate and we didn't have the pups we wanted.

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What to do about a mate for Kunu became an increasing concern of ours.

She was nearing five years of age and getting older every day. By the time her next mating period approached in early February, 1964, we were fairly desperate.

Then the question suggested itself. "If not a dog, why not a wolf?" If we wanted to help the cause of the wolf, there was very little purpose in crossbreeding with a dog. Progeny from wolves would also give us further opportunity to see if the wolf can truly be a household pet of man. Perhaps Kunu was just a fluke. Would all wolves behave as well as Kunu if accepted into the bosom of man as a friend, with no questions asked?

It looked as if I'd be back haunting the zoos again, only this time to find a mate for Kunu. But it posed some serious

problems if we did find an eligible male wolf. We weren't sure we liked the idea of putting Kunu in a cage with a strange wolf to consummate such a delicate personal matter as mating. She might have to stay with him for days before anything happened. She might be a changed animal when she came out. She might be so unhappy she wouldn't want to mate. Most seriously, she could get hurt, maybe even killed.

"You'll have to stay with her," said Elane not feeling sure that we should even go ahead with the idea.

"In the zoo," I said. "Are you nuts?"

"You have to, Daddy," the kids all chimed in.

I was astonished. "You don't think they're going to have sleeping accommodations for me, do you—like they have in some hospitals for prospective fathers?"

"Well, then," said Elane, "you can camp there on the grounds, in front of the cage, where Kunu can see you and know you're near."

"You mean put up a tent and sleep there?"

"It'll only be a couple of days."

"Are you all crazy?" I said. "Can you see me there in front of a tent stirring up beans over a small fire while the people come and go—staring at me, not the animals? They'd probably start tossing peanuts at me too. You're all nuts, that's what. Anyway, what zoo would stand for it?"

"My, but you're sensitive," said Elane.

"You've got to forget about your own feelings and think of Kunu for a change," the girls said. "Just think how she's going to feel being locked up with some strange male."

"And for the first time!" interjected Elane.

"She'll be scared to death," the girls added.

"Now just wait a minute," I said, raising my hand to keep them quiet. "You're all yaking without knowing

whether the zoo will even let Kunu breed with one of their wolves. I've got to speak to them first and find out. Please, first things first, not all this business about setting up breeding headquarters for me at the zoo."

There was a kind of strange irony for me to have to go behind the bars of a zoo, from where I had taken Kunu, to find a mate for her. It made me feel how isolated she was among man, and how isolated she was from her own kind. Yet I had no regrets when I went back and visited the zoos because I realized more than ever before how happy she was in our family. There is no lonelier animal than a wolf locked up in a cage. He has no home, for he is traded across country from zoo to zoo. He is only a specimen in a cage for man to look at, and you can't help but wonder what, if anything, man sees when he stares through the bars at this animal. I could feel grateful that we had saved Kunu from such a fate as this.

"Would the day ever come," I reflected, "when there will be no more wolves in zoos, when man will see there is no more reason to keep wolves there than dogs?"

In trying to find Kunu a mate, I was faced with the same old problem—the scarcity of wolves of any sex. Kunu's family had long ago disappeared from the pens at the Tacoma Zoo. All that were left were one pair, a handsome pure-white Arctic male wolf and a lovely female that looked just like Kunu. But they were already paired off and in the process of mating. There wasn't any purpose in trying to inject Kunu into this picture of domestic bliss.

Nowhere was there a single male wolf available. And so it came to pass that no fruit was born of Kunu. She was a five-year-old wolf and still without puppies.

"Maybe it was just as well," I said, trying to cheer up the family. "Who knows but Kunu might have been hurt badly,

maybe even killed by some lonely wolf who had become mean and cruel and bitter from the many months and years spent in a cage."

"But won't she ever find a mate?" asked Thane, feeling sad.

"I'm afraid not," I said. "Not unless we find a male wolf."

Elane, who had been quietly thinking to herself, suddenly gave a shout of joy, shaking us all out of our gloom. "I've got it! Why not get our own male wolf!"

"Our own male wolf?" everybody said, startled by the idea.

"Yes, raise our own baby male wolf," said Elane. "Don't you see? We raised our own female; now let's raise our own male. Then we won't have to worry anymore. Kunu will have her mate. They'll be friends right from the beginning."

"Another baby wolf?" I said, trying to absorb all the implications of the idea. "You're sure you want to do it all over again? All that trouble with nursing and worrying it might die?"

"Why do we have to nurse it?" said Elane. "You said the pair down in Tacoma are going to have a litter. Well, we'll send word to Joe, the keeper, and get one of the male pups. But not when it's born. Let the mother nurse it. Let her do all the hard work this time. We'll wait till it's weaned. Maybe it's better anyway that a wolf is nursed and raised by its mother."

"How do we know he'll be friendly?" I asked. "He'll be about a month old when we get him."

"He shouldn't have much reason to be crabby about life after getting all that love and attention from his mother," said Elane.

Elane's idea fired us all with a new hope. This was the answer, the only answer.

We got our male wolf pup on May 8, 1964, when he was only a month old. He was the largest of the litter of five, with a big head, deep-blue eyes, and a heavy-boned body covered with the most delicate dark fur. How it brought back memories of the time when Kunu was a tiny cub. We named him Inuk, from the Eskimo, meaning "man pre-eminently," as a toast and good omen to his masculinity.

The happiest of all was Kunu. She seemed to know we had a wolf in our arms as soon as we arrived home from the zoo. Her howl of greeting went up from the backyard, where she had been waiting for us. When Inuk heard her, he howled back in answer with a strong rich voice. It was the voice of Inuk, the male wolf.

They rushed to each other, and the family stood in silent admiration, watching them nuzzle each other in the deep grass where the sun bathed them in a golden light.

"Hail, fellow predators!" my heart sang. "Thy fangs are no more cruel than ours."

